



George Whitefield. A.B.

THE
DOCTRINES
OF THE
GOSPEL
Asserted and Vindicated,
In Eighteen GENUINE
SERMONS,

Upon the following SUBJECTS, viz.

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| <p>I. <i>Of Justification by Christ.</i>
 II. <i>The Almost Christian.</i>
 III. <i>The Extent and Reasonableness of Self-Denial.</i>
 IV. <i>The Necessity and Benefits of Religious Societies.</i>
 V. <i>Intercession every Christian's Duty.</i>
 VI. <i>The Great Duty of Family Religion.</i>
 VII. <i>The Heinous Sin of profane Cursing and Swearing.</i>
 VIII. <i>Thankfulness for Mercies received, a necessary Duty.</i>
 IX. <i>The Eternity of Hell-Torments.</i></p> | <p>X. <i>Directions how to hear Sermons.</i>
 XI. <i>Worldly Business no Plea for Neglect of Religion.</i>
 XII. <i>The Marks of the New Birth.</i>
 XIII. <i>The Power of Christ's Resurrection.</i>
 XIV. <i>The Duty of searching the Scriptures.</i>
 XV. <i>Satan's Devices.</i>
 XVI. <i>The Knowledge of Jesus Christ the best Knowledge.</i>
 XVII. <i>The heinous Sin of Drunkenness.</i>
 XVIII. <i>The Holy Ghost the Privilege of all Believers now, as well as formerly.</i></p> |
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L O N D O N :

Printed for C. DAVIS, at D'Anvers's-Head,
in Chancery-Lane.

M DCC XXXIX

THE

DOCTRINES

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THE P R E F A C E.



WHEN Religion is attack'd on all Sides; by the openly Prophane, such as make a Mock at Sin, and set the Almighty at Defiance; by professed Atheists, those Fools that say there is no God; by the miserly Worldling, who makes his Religion truckle to his Avarice; by the false Hypocrite, who assumes a Shew of Godliness, merely to serve some mean and selfish Purpose: Since, I say, Religion is thus hardly beset; 'tis presum'd that an Attempt to vindicate her Honour, to assert the Purity of her Doctrines, to illustrate her native Beauty and Loveliness, and recommend her as an Object worthy the Choice of every Man, will appear at least pardonable. Many are the Ways by which the God of this World endeavours to lead Men blindfold to Destruction, and surely it will not be thought a Work of Supererogation to expose those Deceits and Delusions, and disperse those Mists of Error, that cloud the Understanding, and bring the Safety of our Souls into the utmost Peril. Whoever professes himself, or would be thought a Christian, must confess, that there is no other Name given among Men, whereby we can be

The PREFACE.

saved, but that of the Blessed Jesus; and that the Doctrines and Precepts contained in the Gospel, are the only Rules for his Conduct and Practice, the Objects of his Faith, and the Foundation of his Hope and Happiness. He whose Persuasion is thus grounded, will not be displeased to see the Way of his Salvation made easy, and the Things which he is to believe and practice, proved, explained, and enforced from Reason and irrefragable Argument.

The Design then of the following Sermons, is to establish such Truths as of late have been made the Subjects of Ridicule and Banter by the profane Wits and Scoffers of the Age; to set right those who have been misled by Sophistical Arguments of Men that design nothing less than the Honour of God and the Good of Souls; and to vindicate the Honour of the Gospel, to assert the Truth and Reasonableness of its Doctrines, and to defend its Author, the Blessed Jesus, against the Attacks of his profess'd Enemies, and the base, cowardly, or treacherous Practices of his false, or weak Friends.

S E R.



S E R M O N I.

Of Justification by CHRIST.

But ye are justified,——1 Cor. vi. 11.

The whole Verse runs thus: — *And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God.*



It has been objected by some who are so unhappy as to dissent from, nay, I may add, by others also, who actually are Friends to the present Ecclesiastical Establishment, that the Ministers of the Church of *land* preach themselves, and not *Christ Jesus* our Lord; that they entertain their People with Lectures of mere Morality, without declaring to them the glad Tidings of Salvation by *Jesus Christ*. How well grounded such an Objection may be, is not my Business to enquire: All I shall say at present to the Point is this; namely, that whenever such a grand Objection is urged against the

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whole Body of the Clergy in general, every honest Minister of *Jesus Christ* should do his utmost to cut off all manner of *Occasion* from those that desire an *Occasion* to take Offence at us; that so by hearing us continually sounding forth the Word of Truth, and declaring with all Boldness and Assurance of Faith, *that there is no other Name given under Heaven, whereby they can be saved, but that of Jesus Christ*; they may be ashamed of this their same confident Boasting against us.

It was an Eye to this Objection, joined with the Agreeableness and Delightfulness of the Subject (for who can but delight to talk of that which the blessed Angels desire to look into?) that induced me to discourse a little on that great and fundamental Article of our Faith; namely, our being freely justified from all our Sins by the precious Blood of *Jesus Christ*. *But ye are washed,* says the Apostle, *but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God.*

The Words beginning with the Particle *But*, have plainly a Reference to something that went before; it may not therefore be improper, before I descend to Particulars, to consider the Words, as they stand related to the Context. The Apostle, in the Verses immediately foregoing, had been reckoning up many notorious Sins, such as Drunkenness, Adultery, Fornication, and such like, the Commission of which, without a true and hearty Repentance, he tells them plainly, would certainly shut them out of the Kingdom of God. But then, lest the sincere *Corinthian* Converts, who we find were once infamous for most or all of these Vices, should either on the one hand grow spiritually proud by seeing them-

selves

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selves differ from their unconverted Brethren, and therefore should be tempted to set them at nought, and to say with the self-conceited Hypocrites in the Prophet, *Come not nigh me, for I am holier than thou*: Or, on the other hand, by looking back on the Multitude of their past Offences, should be apt to think their Sins were too many and grievous to be forgiven: He first, in order to keep them humble, reminds them of their sad Estate before Conversion, telling them in plain Terms, *Such* (or as is might better be read, *these things*) *were some of you*; that is, Not only one, but all that sad Catalogue of Vices I have been before drawing up, some of you were only guilty of; but then, at the same time, to preserve them from Despair, behold he brings them glad Tidings of great Joy: *But ye art washed*, says he, *but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God*.

The former Part of which Text, namely, our being *Sanctified*, I did, in some measure, treat of, when I discoursed on *the Nature and Necessity of the New Birth*: I come now, as was before proposed, to enlarge on the latter Part of it, namely, of our being freely *justified* from all our Sins, by the precious Blood of *Jesus Christ*: *But are justified in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

From which Words I shall endeavour to consider these Three Things.

I. *First*, What is meant by the Word *Justified*.

II. *Secondly*, I shall endeavour to prove, that all Mankind in general, and every individual Person in particular, stands in need of being *justified*.

III. *Thirdly and lastly*, That there is no Possibility of obtaining this *Justification*, which

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we so much want, but by the *precious Blood* of Jesus Christ.

I. *First* then, I am to consider what is meant by the Word *Justified*.

But *ye are Justified*, says the Apostle; which is all the same as though he had said, You have your Sins forgiven, and are looked upon by God, as though you never had offended him at all: For that is the Meaning of the Word *Justified*, in almost all the other Passages of Holy Scripture where this Word is mentioned. Thus when this same Apostle writes to the *Romans*, he tells them, that whom God calls, those he also *justifies*; that is, forgives them their Sins: And again, speaking of *Abraham's Faith*, he tells them, that *Abraham believed on Him that justifies the Ungodly*: That is, who forgives the ungodly Man his Sins. Which Expression the Apostle himself explains by a Quotation out of the *Psalms*; *Blessed is the Man*, says he, *to whom the Lord imputeth no Sin*. From all which Proofs, and many others that might be urged, it is evident that being *justified*, or having our Sins forgiven, are the same as to Signification: So that what the Apostle here affirms of the *Corinthian Converts*, namely, that they were *justified*, amounts to what all of us profess to hold when we just now repeated our *Creed*, and each of us declared in his own Person, *I believe the Forgiveness of Sins*. Which leads me directly to the

II. *Second Thing* proposed, namely, to endeavour to prove that all Mankind in general, and every individual Person in particular, stands in need of being thus *justified*, or having his Sins forgiven.

And

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And indeed the Apostle supposes this in the Words of the Text: *But ye are justified*, says he, thereby implying, that the *Corinthians* (and consequently all Mankind, there being no Difference, as will be shewn hereafter) stood in need of being thus *justified*.

But, not to rest in bare Suppositions, in my farther Enlargements on this Second Head, I shall endeavour to prove that we all stand in need of being *justified*, on two Accounts: First, as we stand chargeable with Original — Secondly, as we have been guilty of Actual Sin.

And first, I affirm that we all stand in need of being *justified*, as we are chargeable with Original Sin: Which, though a Proposition that might be denied by a self-justifying Infidel, who *will not come to Christ that he may have Life*, and stoop to those Terms God has graciously settled for his Salvation; yet can never be denied by any one who believes that St. Paul's Epistles were written by Divine Inspiration; where we are told, that *in Adam all die*; that is, *Adam's Sin* was imputed to all: And lest we should forget to make a particular Application, it is farther added in another Place, that *there is none that doth good* (that is, by Nature) *no, not one*: That we are *all gone out of the Way*; namely, of Original Righteousness; and are by Nature the Children of Wrath. And even David, who was the Man after God's own Heart, and if any one could, might surely plead an Exemption from this universal Corruption, yet confesses, that he was *shapen in Wickedness* and that *in Sin did his Mother conceive him*. I mention but one more Text, as immediately applicable to the present Purpose, St. Paul

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Paul, in his Epistle to the *Romans* says, that *Death came upon all Men, for the Disobedience of one Man, namely, of Adam, even upon those*, says he, (that is, little Children) *who had not sinned after the Similitude of Adam's Transgression*; or, had not been guilty of actual Sin, and therefore could not be punished with temporal Death (which came into the World, as this same Apostle elsewhere informs us, only by Sin) had not the Disobedience of our first Parents been imputed to them. So that what has been said on this Point seems to be excellently summed up in that Article of our Church, where she declares, “ That *Original Sin* standeth not in the following of *Adam*, but it is the Fault and Corruption of the Nature of every Man, that naturally is ingendred of the Offspring of *Adam*; whereby Man is very far gone from Original Righteousness, and is of his own Nature inclined to Evil, so that the Flesh lusteth always contrary to the Spirit; and therefore in every Person born into this World it deserveth God's Wrath and Damnation.

I have been the more particular in treating of this Point, because it is the very Foundation of the *Christian* Religion: For I am verily persuaded, that it is nothing but a Want of being well grounded in the Doctrine of *Original Sin*, and of the helpless, nay, I may say damnable, Condition each of us come into the World in, that makes so many Infidels oppose, and so many that call themselves *Christians*, so very Lukewarm in their Love and Affections to *Jesus Christ*. It is this, and I could almost say this only, that makes Infidelity abound amongst us so much as it does: For alas! we are mistaken, if we imagine that
Men

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Men *now* commence or continue Infidels, and set corrupted Reason, in Opposition to Revelation, merely for want of Evidence, (for I believe it might easily be proved, that a modern Unbeliever is the most credulous Creature living;) No, it is only for want of an humble Mind, of a Sense of their Original Depravity, and an Unwillingness to own themselves so depraved, that makes them so obstinately shut their Eyes against the Light of the Glorious Gospel of *Christ*. Whereas, on the contrary, were they but once pricked to the Heart with a due and lively Sense of their natural Corruption and Liableness to Condemnation, we should have them no more scoffing at Divine Revelation, and looking on it as an idle Tale; but they would cry out with convicted *Paul* — *Lord, what wouldest thou have me to do?* Or, with the trembling Jailor, on a like Occasion, *Men and Brethren, what shall we do to be saved?* It was an Error in this Fundamental Point, that made so many resist the Evidence the Son of God himself gave of his Divine Mission, when he tabernacled amongst us. Every Word he spake, every Action he did, every Miracle he wrought, proved that he came from God. And why then did so many harden their Hearts, and would not believe his Report? Why, He himself informs us, when he tells us, *They will not come to me that they may have Life*: They will obstinately stand out against those Means God had appointed for their Salvation: And St. *Paul* tells us, that *if the Gospel be bid, it is bid to them that are lost*: In whom the God of this World hath blinded the Minds of them which believe not, lest the Light of the Glorious Gospel of *Christ*, who is the Image of God, should shine upon them — 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

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But to return from this Digression, which I could not very well avoid making; if it be asked, How it suits with the Divine Goodness, to impute the Guilt of one Man's Sin, to an innocent Posterity? I should think it sufficient, to make use of the Apostle's Words: *Nay, but O Man, Who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the Thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?* But, to come to a more direct Reply — Persons would do well to consider, that in this first Covenant God made with Man, *Adam* acted as a publick Person, as the common Representative of all Mankind, and consequently we must stand or fall with him. Had he continued in his Obedience, and not eaten the forbidden Fruit, the Benefits of that Obedience would doubtless have been imputed to us: But since he did not persist in it, but broke the Covenant God made with him, and us in Him; who dares charge the Righteous Judge of all the Earth with Injustice, for imputing that to us also? But I shall have an Occasion by and by, to vindicate the Divine Proceedings in this Point more particularly, and therefore I chuse to wave all farther Consideration of it in this Place, and proceed to the other Thing proposed under this Second general Head, namely,

II. To endeavour to prove, That we all stand in need of being *justified*, not only as we are chargeable with *Original*, but as we stand convicted of *Actual Sin*.

That God, as he made Man, has a Right also to demand his Obedience, I suppose, is a Truth no one will deny: That he hath also given us both a natural and a written Law, whereby we are to be judged, cannot be questioned by any one

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one who believes St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans to be of Divine Authority: For in this we are told of a Law written in the Heart, and a Law given by Moses; and that each of us hath broken these Laws, is too evident from our own sad and frequent Experience. Accordingly the Holy Scriptures inform us, *that there is no man which liveth and sinneth not; that in many things we offend all; that if we say we have no Sin we deceive ourselves,* and such like. And if we are thus found Offenders against God, it follows that we stand in need of Forgiveness for thus offending Him; unless we suppose God should enact Laws, and at the same Time not care whether they are obeyed or no; which is as absurd as to suppose that a Prince should establish Laws for the proper Government of his Country, and yet let every Violator of them come off with Impunity. But God has not dealt so foolishly with his Creatures: No, as he gives us a Law, he demands our Obedience to that Law, and has obliged us universally to obey it, under no less a Penalty than incurring his Curse and eternal Death for every Breach of it. For thus speak the Scriptures: *Cursed is he that continueth not in all Things that are written in this Book to do them;* as the Scripture also speaketh in another Place, *The Soul that sinneth, it shall die.* Now it has already been proved that we have all of us sinned; and therefore, unless some Means can be found out to satisfy God's Justice we must perish eternally.

Let us here then stand awhile, and see in what a deplorable Condition each of us comes into the World, and still continues, till we are put into a State of Grace: For surely nothing can well be supposed more deplorable than to be born under the Curse of God; to be charged with *Original Guilt;*

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Guilt; and not only so, but to be convicted as actual Breakers of God's Law, the least Breach of which justly deserves Eternal Damnation. Surely this can be but a melancholy Prospect to view ourselves in, and must put us upon contriving some Means whereby we may satisfy and appease our offended Judge. But what must those Means be? Shall we repent? Alas! There is not one Word mentioned about Repentance in the first Covenant: *The Day that thou eatest thereof, says God, thou shalt surely die.* So that if God be true, unless there be some Way found out to satisfy his Justice, we must perish, and there is no Room left for to expect a Change of Mind in God, though we should seek it with Tears. Well then, if Repentance will not do, shall we plead the Law of Works? Alas! *By the Law shall no Man living be justified: For by the Law comes the Knowledge of Sin.* It is that which convicts and condemns, and therefore can by no means acquit, much less justify us. *Wherewith then shall we come before the Lord, and bow down before the Most High God,* in order to procure the Forgiveness of our Sins? *Shall we come before him with Calves of a Year old, with thousands of Rams, or ten thousands of Rivers of Oil?* Alas! *God has shewed thee, O Man, that this will not avail.* For he hath declared, *I will take no Bullock out of thy House, nor He-Goat out of thy Fold: For all the Beasts of the Forest are mine, and so are the Cattle upon a thousand Hills. Will not the Lord then be pleased to accept our First-born for our Transgression, the Fruits of our Bodies for the Sin of our Souls?* Even this will not purchase our Pardon: For he has declared that *the Children shall not bear the Iniquities of their Parents.* Besides, they are Sinners, and therefore,

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fore, being under the same Condemnation, equally stand in need of Forgiveness with ourselves. They are impure, and will the Lord accept the Blind and Lame for Sacrifice? *O wretched Men that we are! Who shall deliver us from this Body of Death?* Why, I thank God, our Lord Jesus Christ. Which naturally leads me to the *Third general Thing* proposed, which was to endeavour to prove,

III. That there is no Possibility of our obtaining this *Justification*, which we so much want, but by the *precious Blood* of our Lord Jesus Christ: *But ye are justified in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

But this having been in some measure proved by what has been said under the foregoing Head, wherein I have shewn that neither our Repentance, Works, or Sacrifices could possibly take away, or make Attonement for our Sins; nothing remains for me to do under this Head, but to shew that the Death of Jesus Christ has done it for us.

And here I shall still have Recourse to the *Law and to the Testimony*. For after all the most subtle Disputations on either Side, nothing but the lively Oracles of God can give us any Satisfaction in this momentous Point: It being such an inconceivable Mystery, that the Eternal, only-begotten Son of God should die for sinful Man, that we durst not have presumed so much as to have thought of it, had not God revealed it in his holy Word. It is true, Reason may shew us the Wound, but Revelation only can lead us to the Means of our Cure. And though the Method God has been pleased to take to put us in a Way of being happy, may be to the Infidel a *Stumbling-block*, and to the wise Opiniator and Disputer of this World *Foolishness*; yet *Wisdom*, that is, the Dispensation of our Redemption

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demption, *will be justified*, or approved of, and submitted to *by all her truly wise and holy Children*, by every sincere and honest *Christian*.

But to come more directly to the Point before us. Two Things, as was before observed, we wanted, in order to make our Peace with God.

1. To be freed from the Guilt of *Original Sin*: And,

2. From that Punishment we had most justly deserved for our *actual Breaches* of God's Law.

And both these (*Thanks be to God for this unspeakable Gift*) are abundantly secured to us by the Death and Passion of *Jesus Christ*. For what says the Scripture?

1. As to the First, or our being freed from the Guilt of *Original Sin* — It informs us, that *as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive*. And again, *As by the Disobedience of one Man, or by one Transgression, namely, that of Adam, many were made Sinners, so by the Ordinance of one, Jesus Christ, many were made righteous*. And again, *As by the Obedience of one Man, Judgment came upon all Men into Damnation*; that is, all Men were condemned, on having *Adam's Sin* imputed to them: *So by the Obedience of one, that is, Jesus Christ, the free Gift of Pardon and Peace come upon all Men unto Justification of Life*. Which, by the Way, clears up (as I promised to do before) that seeming Disagreement between God's Attributes, in imputing *Adam's Sin* to us, (namely, his Justice and Mercy) and wholly takes off that Imputation of Injustice, which wicked and ungodly Men would blasphemously cast upon the *Righteous Judge of all the Earth*. Had God indeed imputed *Adam's Sin* to his innocent Posterity, and left them to perish in

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it: Had he looked upon and punished them as all Sinners, without providing them a Saviour, we might perhaps have had some Pretence to complain of his Severity, though we could not even then but acknowledge his Justice in the Punishment of Sin. But since *He has not dealt with us after our Deserts, nor rewarded us according to our Iniquity*: Since the same Revelation acquaints us, that *as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive*. Since the same God that informs us, that *Death came even upon those who had not sinned after the Similitude of Adam's Transgression*, declares likewise, that *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*, or put into a State of Salvation: I say since these Things are so, What Reason have such Worms as we to quarrel with the most High God? Doubtless no more than a condemned Criminal has to find fault with his Judge for condemning him for breaking the Law, only that he might give him the Pleasure of a Reprieve. No; as for God, his Ways are perfect, and his Dealings with his Creatures are *holy, just and good*; and as in all his Dispensations, so more especially in our Recovery from our fallen Estate by the Death of Jesus, we may justly say, *Mercy and Truth have met together, Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other*. But

2. Pardon for our *actual Transgression* of God's Law was another Thing which we wanted to have secured to us, before we could be at Peace with God. And this the Holy Scriptures inform us is abundantly done by the Death of Jesus Christ. The Evangelical Prophet foretels that the promised Redeemer should be *wounded for our Transgressions, and bruised for our Iniquities*; that the *Chastisement of our Peace should be upon him*; and that by his

Stripes

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Stripes we should be healed, Isaiah liii. 6. The Angel at his Birth says, that he should save his People from their Sins: And St. Paul declares, that this is a faithful Saying, and worthy of all Acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the World to save Sinners: And here in the Words of the Text, Such (or, as I observed before, these Things) were some of you; but ye are washed, &c — And St. Peter, alluding to the forementioned Passage of Isaiah, testifies of Christ, that His own Self bare our Sins in his own Body on the Tree, that we being dead to Sin, should live unto Righteousness; by whose Stripes, says he, ye are healed, 1 Pet. ii. 24. And in another Place the same Apostle says, Neither is there Salvation in any other; for there is none other name under Heaven given among Men, whereby we must be saved, but the Name of Jesus Christ, Acts iv. 12. How God will be pleased to deal with the Gentiles who sit in Darkness and in the Shadow of Death, and on whom the Son of Righteousness never yet arose, is not for us to enquire. What have we to do to judge those that are without? To God's Mercy let us recommend them, and wait for a Solution of this Point till the Great Day of Accounts, when all God's Dispensations, both of Providence and Grace, will be fully cleared up, by Methods to us, it may be, at present unknown, because unrevealed. However, this we know, that the Judge of all the Earth will, most assuredly, do right.

But it is Time for me to draw towards a Conclusion.

I have now then, Brethren, by the Blessing of God, discoursed on the Words of the Text in the Method I proposed; and have in as plain a manner, as I could, shewn you what is meant by the Word

Word *Justified*, that it signifies our having our Sins forgiven: And have also in some measure proved that we all stand in need of being thus *justified*, as we are chargeable with *Original*, and have been guilty of *Actual Sin*: And lastly, that nothing but the *precious Blood of Jesus Christ* has, or can procure this inestimable Privilege for us.

Many useful Inferences might be drawn from what has been delivered; but as I have detained you, I fear, too long already, permit me only to make a Reflection or two on what has been said, and I have done.

If then we are *freely justified* by the Death of *Jesus Christ*, let us here pause awhile; and as before we reflected on the *Misery*, let us now turn aside and admire the *Happiness* of Man. But alas! how am I lost to think that God the Father, when we were in a State of Enmity by *original*, and of Rebellion by our *actual Sins*, should notwithstanding yearn in his Bowels towards us his fallen, his apostate Creatures: And because nothing but an infinite Ransom could satisfy an infinitely offended Justice, should send his only and dear Son *Jesus Christ* (who is God, blessed for ever, and who had lain in his Bosom from all Eternity) to die a cursed, painful, ignominious Death, for us and for our Salvation! O who can avoid crying out, on the Consideration of this great Mystery of Godliness—*O the Depth of the Riches of God's Love* to us his wretched, miserable, undone Creatures! *How unsearchable is his Mercy, and his Loving Kindness past finding out!* Now know we of a Truth, O God, that thou hast loved us, *since thou hast not withheld thy Son, thy only Son Jesus Christ*, from thus dying for us.

But

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But as we admire the Father sending, let us likewise humbly and thankfully adore the Son coming, when sent to die for Man. But alas! what Thoughts can conceive, what Words express the infinite Greatness of that unparalleled Love, which drew the Son of God down from the Mansions of his Father's Glory to die for sinful Man! The *Jews*, when he only shed a Tear at poor *Lazarus's* Funeral, said, *Behold how he loved him:* How much more justly then may we cry out, *Behold how he loved us*, when he did not spare to shed not only a Tear, but his own precious Blood for us!

And can any poor returning Sinner, after this, despair of Mercy? What! can they see their Saviour hanging on a Tree with Arms stretched out to embrace them, and yet, upon their truly believing on him, doubt of finding Acceptance with him? No, away with all such dishonourable, such desponding Thoughts — Look on his Hands, bored with Pins of Iron; look on his Side, pierced with a cruel Spear, on purpose to unloose the Sluices of his Blood, and open a Fountain for Sin, and for Uncleanness — And then despair of Mercy if you can! No, do but believe on him with your whole Hearts; *Do not crucify Him afresh, and put him again to open Shame*, by leading wicked, lukewarm, ungodly Lives: In short, do but labour to attain *that Holiness, without which no Man shall see the Lord*; and then, *though your Sins be as Scarlet, yet shall they be as Wool; though they be as Crimson, yet shall they be whiter than Snow.*

Which God of his Infinite Mercy grant, &c.

S E R M O N II.

THE ALMOST CHRISTIAN:

O R, T H E

Danger of resting satisfied in any
State short of Perfection.

I N T H E
KNOWLEDGE and PRACTICE
O F T H E
C H R I T I A N R E L I G I O N.

*Be ye perfect. even as your Father which is in
Heaven is perfect. Mat. v. 6.*

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L O N D O N :

Printed for C. DAVIS, at D'Anvers's-Head,
in Chancery-Lane.

M DCC XXXIX.

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S E R M O N II.

The Almost CHRISTIAN.

A C T S xxvi. 28.

Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.



THESE Words contain the ingenuous Confession of King *Agrippa*; which having some Reference to what went before, it may not be improper to relate to you the Substance of the preceeding Verses, to which these Words are so closely connected.

The Chapter then, out of which the Text is taken, contains an admirable Account the great St. Paul gives of his wonderful Conversion from *Judaism* to *Christianity*, when he was called to make his Defence before *Festus* and another *Gentile* Governor. Our Blessed Lord had long since foretold, that *When the Son of Man should be lifted up, his Disciples should be brought before Kings, for his Name's sake, for a Testimony unto them.* And very good

good was the Design of Infinite Wisdom in thus ordaining it: For *Christianity* being from the very Beginning a Doctrine of the Cross, the Princes and Rulers of the Earth thought themselves too high to be instructed by such mean Teachers, or too happy to be disturbed by such unwelcome Truths; and therefore would have always continued Strangers to *Jesus Christ, and him Crucified*, had not the Apostles, by being arraigned before them, gained Opportunities of preaching to them *Jesus and the Resurrection*. St. Paul knew full well that this was the main Reason, why his blessed Master permitted his Enemies at this time to arraign him at a publick Bar: And therefore, in Compliance with the Divine Will, thinks it not sufficient, barely to make his Defence, but endeavours at the same Time to convert his Judges. And this he did with such Demonstration of the Spirit, and of Power, that *Festus*, unwilling to be convinced by the strongest Evidence, cries out with a loud Voice, “ Paul, *much Learning doth make thee mad*”. To which the brave Apostle (like a true Follower of the Holy *Jesus*) meekly replies, *I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the Words of Truth and Soberness*. But in all Probability seeing King *Agrippa* more affected with his Discourse, and observing in him an Inclination to know the Truth, he applies himself more particularly to him: *The King*, says he, *knoweth of these Things; before whom also I speak freely; for I am persuaded that none of those Things are hidden from him*. And then, that if possible he might compleat his wished-for Conversion, he, with an inimitable Strain of Oratory, addresses himself still more closely — *King Agrippa, believest thou*
the

The Almost CHRISTIAN. 5

the Prophets? I know that thou believest them. At which the Passions of the King began to work so strongly, that he was obliged, in open Court, to own himself affected by the Prisoner's Preaching, and ingenuously to cry out — Paul, *almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.*

Which Words, taken with the Context, afford us a lively Representation of the different Reception the Doctrine of *Christ's* Ministers, who come in the Power and Spirit of *St. Paul*, meets with now-a-days in the Minds of Men. For notwithstanding they, like this great Apostle, *speak forth the Words of Truth and Soberness*; and with such Energy and Power, that *all their Adversaries cannot gainsay or resist*; yet, too many, with the most noble *Festus* before-mentioned, being, like him, either too proud to be taught, or too sensual, too careless, or too wordly-minded to live up to their Doctrine — in order to excuse themselves cry out, that *much Learning*, much Study, or, what is more unaccountable, much Piety, *hath made them mad*. And though, blessed be God! all do not thus disbelieve our Report; yet amongst those many others, who gladly receive the Word of Truth and Soberness, there are so few who arrive at any higher Degree of Piety than that of *Agrippa*, or are any farther persuaded than to be *almost Christians* — that I cannot but think it highly necessary to warn my dear Hearers of the Danger of such a State. And therefore, from the Words of the Text, shall endeavour to consider these three Things:

First, What is meant by an *almost Christian*.

B

Secondly

Secondly, What are the chief Reasons, why so many are no more than *almost Christians*.

Thirdly, I shall consider the Ineffectualness, Danger, Absurdity, and Uneasiness that attends those that are but *almost Christians*.

Fourthly, I shall conclude with a general Exhortation, to set all upon striving not only to be *almost*, but *altogether Christians*.

I. And first I am to consider, What is meant by an *almost Christian*.

An *almost Christian* then, if we consider him in respect to his Duty to God, is one that halts between two Opinions, that wavers between *Christ* and the World; that would reconcile *God and Mammon*, that is, Light and Darkness, *Christ and Belial*. It is true, He has an Inclination to Religion, but then he is very cautious how he goes too far in it: His false Heart is always crying out, Spare thyself, do thyself no Harm. He prays indeed, that *God's Will may be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven*: But then, notwithstanding, he is very partial in his Obedience, and fondly hopes that God will not be extreme to mark every thing that he wilfully does amiss; though an inspired Apostle has told him, that he that wilfully offends in one Point, is guilty of all. Above all, he is one that depends much on outward Ordinances, and upon that account looks upon himself as *Righteous*, and despises Others; though at the same Time he may be as great a Stranger to the Divine Life as any other Person whatsoever. In short, he is fond of the *Form*, but never experiences the *Power of Godliness* in his Heart: He goes on Year after Year, feeding and attending
on

on the Means of Grace ; but then, like *Pharaoh's* Lean Kine, is never the better, but rather the worse for them.

If you consider him in respect to his Neighbours, he is one that is strictly just to all ; but then this does not proceed from any Love to God or Regard to Man, but only out of a Principle of Self-Love ; because he knows Dishonesty will spoil his Reputation, and consequently hinder his Thriving in the World.

He is one that depends much on being Negatively Good, and contents himself with the Consciousness of having done no one any Harm ; though he reads in the Gospel, that *the Unprofitable Servant was cast into utter Darkness*, and the barren Fig-tree cursed, and *dried up*, from the Roots, not for bearing *bad*, but *no* Fruit.

He is no Enemy to charitable Contributions, if not too frequently recommended : But then he is quite unacquainted with the kind Offices of *Visiting the Sick and Imprisoned, Cloathing the Naked, and Relieving the Hungry*. He thinks that these Things belong only to the Clergy, though his own false Heart tells him, that nothing but Pride keeps him from exercising these Acts of Humility, and that *Jesus Christ*, in the 25th Chapter of *St. Matthew*, condemns Persons to everlasting Punishment, not for being Fornicators, Drunkards, or Extortioners, but merely for neglecting these charitable Offices, *When the Son of Man*, says our Blessed Lord himself, *shall come in his Glory, He shall set the Sheep on his Right Hand, and the Goats on his Left. And then shall He say unto them on his Left Hand, Depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting Fire prepared for the Devil and his An-*

gels: For I was an Hungred, and ye gave me no Meat; I was Thirsty, and ye gave me no Drink; I was a Stranger, and ye took me not in; Naked, and ye cloathed me not; Sick and in Prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also say, Lord, when saw we Thee an Hungred, or a-thirst, or a Stranger, or naked, or sick, or in Prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have not done it unto one of the least of these my Brothers, ye did it not unto me: And these shall go away into everlasting Punishment. I thought proper to give you this whole Passage of Scripture at large, because our Saviour lays such a particular Stress upon it; and yet notwithstanding it is so little regarded, that were we to judge by the Practice of *Christians*, one should be tempted to think there were no such Verses in the *Bible*.

But to proceed in our Character of an *almost Christian*: If we consider him in respect to himself; as before we said he was strictly honest to his Neighbour; so he is likewise strictly sober in himself: But then both his Honesty and Sobriety proceed from the same Principle of a false Self-Love. It is true, he *runs not into the same Excess of Riot* with other Men; but then it is not out of Obedience to the Laws of God, but either because his Constitution will not away with Intemperance; or rather because he is cautious of forfeiting his Reputation, or unfitting himself for temporal Business. But though he is so prudent as to avoid Intemperance and Excess, for the Reasons before mentioned; yet he always goes to the Extremity of what is lawful. It is true, he is no Drunkard; but then he has no *Christian Self-Denial*

Denial to plead for him. He cannot think our Saviour to be so austere a Master, as to deny us to indulge ourselves in some Particulars: And so by this Means he is kept out of a Sense of true Religion, as much as if he lived in Debauchery, or any other Crime whatever. As to settling his Principles as well as Practice, he is guided more by the World, than by the Word of God. As for his Part, he cannot think the Way to Heaven so narrow as some would make it: And therefore considers not so much what Scripture requires, as what such and such a good Man does, or what will best suit his own corrupt Inclinations. Upon this Account, he is not only very cautious himself, but likewise very careful of young Converts, whose Faces are set Heavenward; and therefore is always acting the Devil's Part, and bidding them *spare themselves*, though they are doing no more than what the Scripture strictly requires of them to do. The Consequence of which is, that *he suffers not himself to enter into the Kingdom of God, and they that are entering in he hinders.*

Thus lives the *almost Christian*: Not that I can say, I have fully described him to you; but from these Out-lines and Sketches of his Character, if your Consciences have done their proper Offices, and make a particular Application of what has been said to your own Hearts, I cannot but fear that some of you may observe some Features in his Picture, odious as it is, too near resembling your own; and therefore cannot but hope, at the same Time, that you join with the Apostle in the Words immediately following the Text, and wish yourselves *not only almost, but altogether Christians.*

II. But it is Time for me to proceed to the *Second general Thing* proposed; namely, to consider the Reasons why so many are no more than *almost Christians*.

2. And the first Reason I shall mention is, because so many set out with false Notions of Religion; and though they live in a *Christian Country*, yet know not what *Christianity* is. This perhaps may be esteemed a hard Saying, but Experience sadly evinces the Truth of it; for some place Religion in being of this or that Communion; more in Morality; most in a Round of Duties, and a Model of Performances; and few, very few acknowledge it to be, what it really is, a thorough inward Change of Nature, a Divine Life, a Vital Participation of *Jesus Christ*, an Union of the Soul with God; which the Apostle expresses by saying, *He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit*. Hence it happens that so many, even of the most knowing Professors, when you come to converse with them concerning the Essence, the Life, the Soul of Religion, I mean our *New Birth* in *Jesus Christ*, confess themselves quite ignorant of the Matter, and cry out with *Nicodemus*, *How can this Thing be!* And no wonder then, that so many are only *almost Christians*, when so many know not what *Christianity* is: No Marvel so many take up with the *Form*, when they are quite Strangers to the *Power of Godliness*; or content themselves with the Shadow, when they know so little about the Substance of it. And this is one Cause why so many are *almost*, why so few are *altogether Christians*.

2. A Second Reason that may be assigned why so many are no more than *almost Christians*, is a servile Fear of Man: Multitudes there are, and have been, who, though awakened to a Sense of the Divine Life, and *have tasted and felt the Powers of the World to come*; yet out of a base sinful Fear of being counted singular, or contemned by Men, have suffered all those good Impressions to wear off again. It is true they have some Esteem for *Jesus Christ*; but then, like *Nicodemus*, they should *come to him only by Night*; They are willing to serve him; but then they would do it *secretly, for Fear of the Jews*: They have a *Mind to see Jesus*, but then *they cannot come to him, because of the Press*, for fear of being laughed at, and ridiculed by those with whom they used to sit at Meat. But well did our Saviour prophesy of such Persons, *How can ye love me which receive Honour one of another?* Alas! have they never read, that *the Friendship of this World is Enmity with God*, and that our Lord himself has threatned, *Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, or of my Words, in this wicked and adulterous Generation, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father and of his Holy Angels?* But no Wonder that so many are no more than *almost Christians*, since so many love the Praise of Men more than the Honour which cometh of God.

3. A third Reason why so many are no more than *almost Christians*, is a reigning Love of Money. This was the pitiable Case of that forward young Man in the Gospel, who came running to our Blessed Lord, and kneeling before him, enquired what *He must do to inherit Eternal Life*;

to which our Blessed Master replied, *Thou knowest the Commandments, Do not Kill, Do not commit Adultery, Do not Steal:* To which the young Man replied (Oh, that every young Man here present could do so too) *All these I have kept from my Youth.* But when our Lord proceeded to tell him, *Yet lackest thou one Thing, Go sell all that thou hast and give to the Poor — he was grieved at that Saying, and went away sorrowful, for he had great Possessions!* Poor Youth! he had a good Mind to be a *Christian*, and to inherit Eternal Life, but thought it too dear, if it could be purchased at no less an Expence than of his whole Estate! And thus many, both Young and Old, now-a-days come running to worship our blessed Lord in Publick, and kneel before him in Private, and enquire at his Gospel, what they must do to inherit Eternal Life: But when they find they must renounce the Self-Enjoyment of Riches, and forsake *all* in Affection to follow Him, they cry, *the Lord pardon us in this Thing! — We, pray Thee, have us excused. —*

But is Heaven so small a Trifle in such Men's Esteem, as not to be worth a little gilded Earth? Is Eternal Life so mean a Purchase, as not to deserve the temporary Renunciation of a few transitory Riches? Surely it is. But however inconsistent such a Behaviour may be, this inordinate Love of Money is too evidently the common and fatal Cause why so many are no more than *almost Christians*.

4. Nor is the reigning Love of Pleasure a less uncommon, or a less fatal Cause why so many are no more than *almost Christians*. Thousands and ten Thousands there are, who despise Riches, and
would

would willingly be true Disciples of *Jesus Christ*, would parting with their Money make them so; but when they are told that our Blessed Lord has laid it down as an indispensable Condition, that *Whosoever will come after Him must deny himself* — like the pitiable young Man before mentioned, *they go away sorrowful*: For they have too great a Love for sensual Pleasures: They will, like *Herod*, perhaps send for the Ministers of *Christ*, as he did for *John*, and bear them gladly: But touch them in their *Herodias*, tell them they must part with such and such a darling Pleasure; and with wicked *Abab* they cry out, *Hast thou found us, O our Enemy?* Tell them of the Necessity of *Mortification*, *Fasting*, and *Self-Denial*, and it is as difficult to them to hear, as if you was to bid them *cut off a Right Hand, or pluck out a Right Eye*: They cannot think our Blessed Lord requires so much at their Hands, though an inspired Apostle has commanded us to *mortify our Members which are upon the Earth*: And he himself, even after he had converted Millions, and was very near arrived to the End of his Race, yet professed that it was his daily Practice to *keep under his Body, and bring it into Subjection, lest after he had preached to Others, he himself should be a Cast-away!*

But some Men would be wiser than this great Apostle, and chalk out to us what they falsely imagine an easier Way to Happiness. They would flatter us we may go to Heaven without offering Violence to our sensual Appetites; and enter into the strait Gate without striving against our carnal Inclinations. And this is another Reason why so many are only *almost*, and not altogether *Christians*.

5. The fifth and last Reason I shall assign, why so many are only *almost Christians*, is a Fickleness and Instability of Temper.

It has been, no doubt, the Misfortune that many a Minister and sincere *Christian* has met with, to weep and wail over Numbers of promising Converts, who seemingly began in the Spirit, but after a while have fell away, and basely ended in the Flesh; and this not for want of right Notions in Religion, nor out of a servile Fear of Man, nor out of Love of Money or sensual Pleasure, but out of an Instability and Fickleness of Temper. They looked upon Religion merely for Novelty, as something which pleases them for a while; but after their Curiosity was satisfied, they have laid it aside again: Like the young Man that came to see *Jesus* with a Linen Cloath about his naked Body, they have followed him a Season, but when Temptations have come to take hold on them, for want of a little more Resolution, they have been stripped of all their good Intentions, and fled away *naked*. They at first, *like a Tree planted by the Water-side*, grew up and flourished for a while; but *having no Root of themselves*, no inward Principle of Holiness and Piety, like *Jonah's Gourd*, were soon *dried up, cut down, and withered*. Their good Intentions are but too like the violent Motions of the Animal Spirits of a Body newly beheaded, which though impetuous, are not lasting. In short, they set out well in their Journey to Heaven, but finding the Way either narrower or longer than they expected — through an Unsteadiness of Temper, they have made an eternal Halt, and so *returned like the Dog to his Vomit, or like the Sow that was washed to her wallowing in the Mire!*

But

But I tremble to pronounce the Fate of such unstable Professors, *who having put their Hands to the Plow, for want of a little more Resolution, shamefully look back.* How shall I repeat to them that dreadful Threatning, *If any Man look back, my Soul shall have no Pleasure in him:* And again, *It is impossible,* that is, exceeding difficult at least, *for those that have been once enlightened, and have tasted the good Gift of God's Holy-Spirit, and the Powers of the World to come, if they should fall away, to be renewed again unto Repentance.* But notwithstanding the Gospel is so severe against Apostates, yet many that begun well; through a Fickleness of Temper, (Oh that none of us here present may ever be such) have been by this Means, of *the Number of those that turn back unto Perdition.* And this is the fifth and last Reason I shall give, why so many are only *almost*, and not *altogether Christians.*

But you, Brethren, have not *so* learned Christ. God forbid that a Fear of a little Contempt, a Love of a little worldly Gain, or a Fondness for a little sensual Pleasure, or want of steady Resolution, should hinder you from entering into Eternal Life, or make you so sottish as to think you may compound Matters between God and your Souls.

III. Proceed we therefore now to the *Third General Thing* proposed, namely, to consider the Folly of being no more than an *almost Christian.*

And to the first Proof I shall give of the Folly of such a Proceeding is, — that it is ineffectual to Salvation. It is true, such Men are almost Good, but

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but *almost* to hit the Mark is *really* to miss it. God requires us to *love him with all our Hearts, with all our Souls, and with all our Strength*: He loves us too well to admit any Rival; because so far as our Hearts are empty of God, so far must they be unhappy. The Devil, indeed, like the false Mother that came before *Solomon*, would have our Hearts divided, as she would have had the Child; but God, like the true Mother, will have all or none. *My Son give not thy Heart*, thy whole Heart, is the general Call to all: And if we do not perform this Condition, we never can expect the Divine Mercy.

Persons may indeed flatter themselves, that a partial Obedience will serve their Turn; but God at the Great Day will strike them dead, as he did *Ananias and Sapphira* by the Mouth of his Servant *Peter*, for pretending to offer him all their Hearts, when they *keep back* from him the greatest Part. They may perhaps impose upon their fellow Creatures for a while, but he that enabled *Elijah* to cry out, *Come in thou Wife of Jeroboam*, when she came disguised to enquire about her sick Son, will also discover them through their most artful Dissimulations, and if *their Hearts are not whole with him* — appoint them their Portion with *Hypocrites and Unbelievers*.

But secondly, What renders an half-way Piety more inexcusable is, that it is not only insufficient to our own Salvation, but also most prejudicial to that of Others.

An *almost Christian* is one of the most hurtful Creatures in the World: He is a *Wolf in Sheep's Cloathing*; he is one of those false Prophets our Blessed Lord bids us beware of in his Sermon on the Mount, who would persuade Men, that the
Way

Way to Heaven is broader than it really is; and thereby, as it was observed before, *enter not into the Kingdom of God themselves, and those that are entering in they hinder.* These, these are the Men that turn the World into a lukewarm *Laodicean* Spirit; that hang out false Lights, and so shipwreck unthinking benighted Souls in their Voyage to the Haven where they would be. These are they that are greater Enemies to the Cross of *Christ*, than Infidels themselves: For of an Unbeliever every one will be aware; but an *almost Christian*, through his subtle Hypocrisy, *draws away many after him*; and therefore must expect to *receive the greater Damnation.*

But thirdly, as it is most prejudicial to ourselves and hurtful to others, so it is the greatest Piece of Ingratitude we can express towards our Lord and Master *Jesus Christ*. For did he come down from Heaven, and shed his precious Blood, to purchase these Hearts of ours, and shall we only give him half of them? Oh how can we say we love him? How can we call him our Saviour, when we will not endeavour sincerely to approve ourselves to him, and so let him see the Travail of his Soul, and be satisfied!

Had any of us purchased a Slave at a most expensive Rate, that was before involved in the utmost Miseries and Torments, and so must have continued for ever, had we shut up our Bowels of Compassion from him; and was this Slave afterwards to grow rebellious, or deny giving us but half his Service: How, how should we exclaim against his base Ingratitude! And yet this base ungrateful Slave thou art, O Man, who acknowledgest thyself to be redeemed from infinite unavoidable

voidable Misery and Punishment by the Death of *Jesus Christ*, and yet wilt not give thyself wholly to him. But shall we deal with God our Maker in a Manner we would not be dealt with by a Man like ourselves? Shall we mete out a less Measure of Love to our Saviour, than we would have dealt to ourselves? God forbid!

IV. No, (that I may come to the *last Thing* proposed, namely, to add a Word or two of Exhortation to be not on y *almost*, but *altogether Christians*) let us scorn all such base and treacherous Treatment of our King and Saviour, nay our God. Let us not take some Pains all our Lives to go to Heaven, and yet plunge ourselves into Hell at last. Let us give God our whole Hearts, and no longer *halt between two Opinions*: *If the World be God, let us serve That*; *If Pleasure be a God, let us serve That*; but *if the Lord He be a God, let us, Oh, let us serve Him alone*. Alas! why, why should we stand out any longer? Why should we be so in Love with Slavery, as not wholly to renounce the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, which, like so many spiritual Chains, bind down our Souls, and hinder them from flying up to God. Alas! what are we afraid of? Is not God able to reward our entire Obedience? If He is, as the *almost Christian's* lame Way of serving Him seems to grant, — Why then will we not serve Him entirely? For the same Reason we do so much, why do we not do more? Or do you think that being only half religious will make you happy, but that going farther will render you miserable and uneasy? Alas! this, my Brethren, is Delusion all over: For what is this but *half Piety*, this wavering

ing between God and the World, that makes so many that are seemingly well disposed, such utter Strangers to the Comforts of Religion? They chuse just so much of Religion as will disturb them in their Lusts, and follow their Lusts so far as to deprive themselves of the Comforts of Religion. Whereas on the contrary, would they sincerely *leave all* in Affection, and *give their Hearts* wholly to God, they would then (and they cannot 'till then) experience the unspeakable Pleasure of having a Mind at Unity with itself, and enjoy such a Peace of God, which even in this Life passes all Understanding, and which they were entire Strangers to before. It is true, if we will devote our selves entirely to God, we must meet with Contempt; but then it is because Contempt is necessary to heal our Pride. We must renounce some sensual Pleasure; but then it is because those unfit us for Spiritual ones, which are infinitely better. We must renounce the Love of the World; but then it is that we may be filled with the Love of God: And when that has once enlarged our Hearts, we shall like *Jacob*, when he served for his beloved *Rachel*, think nothing too difficult to undergo, no Hardships too tedious to endure, because of the Love we shall then have for our Redeemer. Thus easy, thus delightful will be the Ways of God even in this Life: But when once we throw off these Bodies, and our Souls are *filled with all the Fulness of God*, Oh! what Heart can conceive, what Tongue can express, with what unspeakable Joy and Consolation we shall then look back on our past sincere and hearty Services, which have procured us so invaluable a Reward! Think you then, my dear Hearers, we shall repent we had done too much; or rather

ther think you not we shall be ashamed that we did no more; and blush we were so backward to give up all to God: When He intended hereafter to give us himself?

Let me therefore, to conclude, exhort you, my Brethren, to have always the unspeakable Reward of an entire Obedience set before you: And think withal that every Degree of Holiness you neglect, every Instance of Piety you pass by, is a Jewel taken out of your Crown, a Degree of Blessedness lost in the Vision of God. Oh! do but always think and act thus, and you will no longer be labouring to compound Matters between God and the World; but on the contrary, be daily endeavouring to give up yourselves more and more unto Him, you will be always Watching, always Praying, always aspiring after farther Degrees of Purity and Love, and so consequently always preparing yourselves for a fuller Light and Enjoyment of that God, in whose Presence there is Fulness of Joy, and at whose Right Hand there are Pleasures for ever more. *Amen! Amen.*

SERMON

S E R M O N III.

T H E

Extent and Reasonableness

O F

S E L F - D E N I A L

Proved from the Nature of a

CHRISTIAN'S LIFE;

The Motives to practice this Duty; and recommended from our Saviour's own Behaviour.

Therefore I take Pleasure in Infirmities, in Reproaches, in Necessities, in Persecutions, in Distresses for Christ's Sake: For when I am weak, then I am strong.
2 Cor. xii. 10.

By GEORGE WHITEFIELD, A.B.
of Pembroke-College, Oxford.

L O N D O N:

Printed for C. DAVIS, at D'Anvers's-Head,
in Chancery-Lane.

M DCC XXXIX.

SEEK MON III.

THE

Extent and Reach of

OF

SELF-DENIAL

Proved from the Nature of a

CHRISTIAN'S LIFE:

The Motives to practice this Duty; and the
consequences of neglecting our duty to our
neighbour.

By the Rev. Mr. J. H. ...
in his Sermon at the Anniversary of the ...
at ... on the 1st of ... 1791.

By GEORGE WHITEHEAD, A.B.
of ... College, Oxford.

L O N D O N :

Printed by G. DAVIS, at D. Innes's Head,
in Chancery-Lane.

MDCCLXXX.



S E R M O N III.

The *Extent* and *Reasonableness* of SELF-DENIAL.

L U K E ix. 25.

*And He said unto them all, If any Man
will come after me, let him deny himself.*



HOWEVER reads the Gospel with a single Eye, and sincere Intention, will find that our Blessed Lord took all Opportunities of reminding his Disciples that his Kingdom was not of this World ; that his Doctrine was a Doctrine of the Cross ; and that their professing themselves to be his Followers would call them to a constant State of voluntary or *Self-suffering* and *Self-denial*.

The Words of the Text afford us one Instance, among many, of our Saviour's Behaviour in this Matter : For having in the preceding Verses revealed himself to *Peter*, and the other Apostles,

to

to be *The Christ of God*; lest they should be too much elated with such a peculiar Discovery of his Deity, or think that their Relation to so great a Personage would be attended with nothing but Pomp and Grandeur, He tells them, in the 22d Verse, that *the Son of Man was to suffer many things* in this World, though He was to be crowned with Eternal Glory and Honour in the next: And that if any of them or their Posterity would share in the same Honour, they must bear a Part with him in his Self-denial and Sufferings. For *He said unto them all, If any Man will come after me, let him deny himself.*

From which Words I shall consider these three Things:

- I. *First*, The Nature of the *Self-denial* recommended in the Text; and in how many Respects we must deny ourselves, in order to come after *Jesus Christ*.
- II. *Secondly*, I shall endeavour to prove the Universality and Reasonableness of this Duty of *Self-denial*.
- III. *Thirdly* and *lastly*, I shall offer some Considerations, which may serve as so many Motives to reconcile us to, and quicken us in the Practice of this Doctrine of *Self-denial*.

I. And *first* then, I am to shew the Nature of the *Self-denial* recommended in the Text; or in how many Respects we must deny ourselves in order to follow *Jesus Christ*.

Now, as the Faculties of the Soul are distinguished by the Understanding, Will, and Affections;

tions; so in all these must each of us *deny himself*. We must not *lean to our own Understanding*, being *wise in our own Eyes, and prudent in our own Sight*; but we must submit our short-sighted Reason to the Light of Divine Revelation: For there are Mysteries in Religion, which are above, though not contrary to, our natural Reason: And therefore we shall never become *Christians* unless we cast down *Imaginations, and every high Thing that exalteth itself against the Knowledge of God, and bring into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Christ*. It is in this Respect as well as others, that we must *become Fools for Christ's Sake*, and acknowledge we know nothing without Revelation, as we ought to know. We must then, with all Humility and Reverence, embrace the mysterious Truths revealed to us *in the Holy Scriptures*; for thus only can we become truly Wise, even *Wise unto Salvation*. It was Matter of our Blessed Lord's Thanksgiving to his Heavenly Father, that he had *hid these Things from the Wise and Prudent, and had revealed them unto Babes*. And in this respect also we must *be converted and become as little Children*, teachable, and willing to follow the Lamb into what soever Mysteries he shall be pleased to lead us; and believe and practice all divine Truths, not because we can demonstrate them, but because God, *who cannot lye*, has revealed them to us.

Hence then we may trace Infidelity to its Fountain Head: For it is nothing else but a Pride of the Understanding, an Unwillingness to submit to the *Truth of God*, that makes so many, professing themselves Wise, to become such Fools

S E R M O N I I I

T H E

Extent and Reach of the

O F

S E E F I D E N T I A L

Proved from the Nature of a

C H R I S T I A N ' S L I B E

Addressed to the Brethren of the
Church of Christ, at the
Annual Conference, 1844.

By
J. H. DAVIS, of the
Church of Christ, at the
Annual Conference, 1844.

Published by
J. H. DAVIS, at the
Church of Christ, at the
Annual Conference, 1844.

Printed by
J. H. DAVIS, at the
Church of Christ, at the
Annual Conference, 1844.

Entered by J. H. DAVIS, at the
Church of Christ, at the
Annual Conference, 1844.

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S E R M O N III.

The *Extent* and *Reasonableness* of SELF-DENIAL.

L U K E ix. 25.

*And He said unto them all, If any Man
will come after me, let him deny himself.*



HOWEVER reads the Gospel with a single Eye, and sincere Intention, will find that our Blessed Lord took all Opportunities of reminding his Disciples that his Kingdom was not of this World ; that his Doctrine was a Doctrine of the Cross ; and that their professing themselves to be his Followers would call them to a constant State of voluntary or *Self-suffering* and *Self-denial*.

The Words of the Text afford us one Instance, among many, of our Saviour's Behaviour in this Matter : For having in the preceding Verses revealed himself to *Peter*, and the other Apostles,
to

to be *The Christ of God*; lest they should be too much elated with such a peculiar Discovery of his Deity, or think that their Relation to so great a Personage would be attended with nothing but Pomp and Grandeur, He tells them, in the 22d Verse, that *the Son of Man was to suffer many things* in this World, though He was to be crowned with Eternal Glory and Honour in the next: And that if any of them or their Posterity would share in the same Honour, they must bear a Part with him in his Self-denial and Sufferings. For *He said unto them all, If any Man will come after me, let him deny himself.*

From which Words I shall consider these three Things:

- I. *First*, The Nature of the *Self-denial* recommended in the Text; and in how many Respects we must deny ourselves, in order to come after *Jesus Christ*.
- II. *Secondly*, I shall endeavour to prove the Universality and Reasonableness of this Duty of *Self-denial*.
- III. *Thirdly* and *lastly*, I shall offer some Considerations, which may serve as so many Motives to reconcile us to, and quicken us in the Practice of this Doctrine of *Self-denial*.

I. And *first* then, I am to shew the Nature of the *Self-denial* recommended in the Text; or in how many Respects we must deny ourselves in order to follow *Jesus Christ*.

Now, as the Faculties of the Soul are distinguished by the Understanding, Will, and Affections;

tions; so in all these must each of us *deny himself*. We must not *lean to our own Understanding*, being *wise in our own Eyes, and prudent in our own Sight*; but we must submit our short-sighted Reason to the Light of Divine Revelation: For there are Mysteries in Religion, which are above, though not contrary to, our natural Reason: And therefore we shall never become *Christians* unless we cast down *Imaginations, and every high Thing that exalteth itself against the Knowledge of God, and bring into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Christ*. It is in this Respect as well as others, that we must *become Fools for Christ's Sake*, and acknowledge we know nothing without Revelation, as we ought to know. We must then, with all Humility and Reverence, embrace the mysterious Truths revealed to us *in the Holy Scriptures*; for thus only can we become truly Wise, even *Wise unto Salvation*. It was Matter of our Blessed Lord's Thanksgiving to his Heavenly Father, that he had *bid these Things from the Wise and Prudent, and had revealed them unto Babes*. And in this respect also we must *be converted and become as little Children*, teachable, and willing to follow the Lamb into what soever Mysteries he shall be pleased to lead us; and believe and practice all divine Truths, not because we can demonstrate them, but because God, *who cannot lye*, has revealed them to us.

Hence then we may trace Infidelity to its Fountain Head: For it is nothing else but a Pride of the Understanding, an Unwillingness to submit to the *Truth* of God, that makes so many, professing themselves Wise, to become such Fools

as to *deny the Lord who* has so dearly bought them ; and dispute the Divinity of that Eternal Word, *in whom they live, and move, and have their Being* : Whereby it is justly to be feared, they will bring upon themselves sure, if not swift, Destruction.

But to return : As we must deny ourselves in our Understandings, so must we deny, or, as it might be more properly rendered, renounce our Wills : That is, we must make our own Wills no Principle of Action, but *whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we must do all*, not merely to please ourselves, but *to the Glory of God*. Not that we are therefore to imagine we are to have no Pleasure in any Thing we do, (*Wisdom's Ways are Ways of Pleasantness*) but pleasing ourselves must not be the principal, but only the subordinate End of our Actions.

And I cannot but particularly press this Doctrine upon you, because it is the Grand Secret of our Holy Religion. It is this, my Brethren, that distinguishes the true *Christian* from the mere Moralist and formal Professor ; and which alone can render any of our Actions acceptable in God's Sight : For *if thine Eye be single*, says our Blessed Lord, *Matth. vi. 22.* that is, if thou aimest simply to please God, without any regard to thy own Will, *thy whole Body*, that is, all thy Actions, *will be full of Light* ; agreeable to the Gospel, which is called *Light* : But *if thine Eye be evil*, if thine Intention be diverted any other Way, *thy whole Body*, all thy Actions, *will be full of Darknes*s, unprofitable, and capable of no Reward.

ward. For we must not only do the Will of God, but do it *because* it is his Will; since we pray that God's *Will may be done on Earth as it is in Heaven*. And, no doubt, the blessed Angels, not only do every Thing that God willeth, but do it chearfully, out of this Principle, because God willeth it: And if we would live as we pray, we must *go and do likewise*.

But farther; as we must renounce our own Wills in *doing*, so likewise must we renounce them in *suffering* the Will of God. Whatsoever befalls us, we must say with good old *Eli*, *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good*; or with one that was infinitely greater than *Eli*, *Father, not my Will, but thine be done* — O *Jesu*, thine was an innocent Will, and yet thou renouncest it: Teach us, even us also, O our Saviour! to submit our Wills to thine, in all *the Evils* which shall be *brought upon us*; and *in every thing* enable us to *give Thanks*, since it is thy blessed *Will concerning us*!

Thirdly and lastly, we must deny ourselves, as in our Understandings and Wills, so likewise in our Affections. More particularly we must deny ourselves the pleasurable Indulgence and Self-Enjoyment of Riches: *If any Man will come after me*, says our Blessed Lord, *he must forsake all and follow me*. And again (to shew the utter Inconsistency of the Love of the Things of this World with the Love of the Father) he tells us, that *unless a Man forsake all that he hath, he cannot be my Disciple*.

Far be it from me to think that these Texts are to be taken in a literal Sense, as though they

obliged rich Persons to go sell all that they have, and give to the Poor, (for that would put it out of their Power to be serviceable to the Poor for the future) but however they certainly imply thus much, That we are to sit loose to, sell and forsake all in Affection, and be willing to part with every thing, when God shall require it at your Hands: That is, as the Apostle observes, we must *use the World as though we used it not*; and though we are *in the World*, we must not be *of it*. We must look upon ourselves as Stewards and not Proprietors of the manifold Gifts of God; provide first what is necessary for ourselves and for our Households, and expend the rest, not in Indulgence and superfluous Ornaments, forbidden by the Apostle, but in cloathing, feeding, and relieving the naked, hungry, distressed Disciples of *Jesus Christ*. This is what our Blessed Lord would have us understand by *forsaking all*, and in this Sense must each of us *deny himself*.

I am sensible that this will seem *an hard Saying* to many, who will be offended because they are covetous, and *Lovers of Pleasure more than Lovers of God*; But if I yet pleased such Men, I should not be the *Servant of Christ*. No, we must not like *Abab's* false Prophets, have a *lying Spirit in our Mouths*, nor fail to *declare* (with St. Paul) *the whole Will of God*; and like honest *Micaiah*, out of Piety and Compassion, tell Men the Truth, though they may falsely think *we prophecy not Good, but Evil concerning them*.

But to proceed: As we must renounce our Affection for Riches, so likewise our Affections for our Relations, when they stand in Opposition

tion to our Love of, and Duty to God: For thus saith the Saviour of the World: *If any Man will come after me, and hateth not his Father and Mother, his Children and Brethren and Sisters, yea and his own Life also, he cannot be a Disciple*—— Strange Doctrine this! What, hate our own Flesh! What, hate the Father that begat us, the Mother that bare us! *How can these Things be?* Can God contradict himself? Has he not bid us honour our Father and Mother? And yet we are commanded to hate them. How must these Truths be reconciled? Why, by interpreting the Word *hate*, not in a rigorous and absolute Sense, but *comparatively*: Not as implying a total Alienation, but a less Degree of Affection. For thus our Blessed Saviour himself, (the best and surest Expofitor of his own Meaning) explains it in a parallel Text, *Matth. x. 37. He that loveth Father or Mother more than me, is not worthy of me: He that loveth Son or Daughter more than me is not worthy of me.* So that when the Persuasions of our Friends (as for our Trial they may be permitted to be) are contrary to the Will of God, we must say with *Levi, we have not known them*; or, agreeably to our Blessed Lord's Rebuke to *Peter, Get you behind me, my Adversaries, for you savour not the Things that be of God, but the things that are of Men.*

To conclude this Head: We must *deny ourselves* in Things indifferent: For it might easily be shewn that as many, if not more, perish by an immoderate Use of Things in themselves indifferent as by any gross Sin whatever. A prudent *Christian* therefore will consider not only what is *lawful* but

what is *expedient* also: Not so much what Degrees of *Self-denial* best suit his Inclinations here, as what will most effectually break his Will, and fit him for greater Degrees of Glory hereafter.

But is this the Doctrine of *Christianity*? And is not the *Christian* World then asleep? If not, whence the Self-indulgence, whence the reigning Love of Riches which we every where meet with? Above all, whence that predominant Greediness of sensual Pleasure, that has so over-run this sinful Nation, that, was a pious Stranger to come amongst us, he would be tempted to think some Heathen *Venus* was worshipped here, and that the Temples were dedicated to her Service. But we have the Authority of an inspired Apostle to affirm that *they who live in such a Round of Pleasure are dead while they live*: Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, *Awake thou that sleepest, and Christ shall give thee Light*: But the Power of raising the spiritual Dead belongeth only unto God.— Do Thou therefore, O Holy *Jesus*, who by thy Almighty Word commandest *Lazarus* to come forth, though he had lain in the Grave *so many Days*, speak also as effectually to these spiritually dead Souls, whom *Satan* for these many Years has so fast bound by sensual Pleasures, that they are not so much as able to lift up their Eyes or Hearts to Heaven.

II. But I pass on to the *Second* general Thing proposed, *viz.* to consider the universal Obligation, and Reasonableness of this Doctrine of *Self-Denial*.

When

When our Blessed Master had been discoursing publickly concerning the Watchfulness of the *faithful and wise Steward*, his Disciples asked him, *Speakest thou this Parable to all, or only to us?* The same Question I am aware has been, and will be put concerning the foregoing Doctrine: For too many, unwilling to take Christ's easy Yoke upon them, in order to evade the Force of the Gospel Precepts, would pretend that all those Commands concerning *Self-Denial*, renouncing ourselves and the World, belonged only to our Lord's first and immediate Followers, and not *to us or to our Children*. But such Persons greatly err, *not knowing the Scriptures, nor the Power of Godliness in their Hearts*. For the Doctrine of *Jesus Christ*, like his blessed Self, is *the same Yesterday, To Day, and for ever*. What he said unto *one*, he said unto *all*, even unto the Ends of the World; *If any Man will come after me, let him deny himself*. And in the Text it is particularly mentioned that *He said unto them all*. And lest we should still absurdly imagine that this Word *all* was to be confined to his Apostles, with whom he was then discoursing, it is said in another Place, that *Jesus* turned unto the Multitude and said, *If any Man will come after me, and hate not his Father and Mother, yea and his own Life also, he cannot be my Disciple*. " When " our blessed Lord had spoken a certain Parable, " it is said, *the Scribes and Pharisees were offended, " for they knew the Parable was spoken against " them*: And if *Christians* can now read these " plain and positive Texts of Scriptures, and at " the same time not think they are spoken of them, " they

“ they are more hardened than *Jews*, and more
 “ insincere than *Pharisees*. *.

In the former Part of this Discourse I observed that the Precepts concerning *forsaking* and *selling all* did not oblige us in a literal Sense, because the State of the Church does not demand it of us, as it did of the Primitive *Christians*; but still the same Deadness to the World, the same abstemious Use of, and Readiness to part with our Goods for *Christ's* sake, it is absolutely necessary for, and as obligatory on us, as it was on them. For though the Church may differ as to the outward State of it, in different Ages, yet as to the Purity of its inward State, it was, is, and always will be invariably the same. And all the Commands which we meet with in the *Epistles*, about mortifying our Members, which are upon the Earth, of setting our Affections on things above, and of not being conformed to this World; are but so many incontestable Proofs that the same Holiness, Heavenly-mindedness, and Deadness to the World, is as necessary for us as for our Lord's immediate Followers.

But farther, as such an Objection argues an Ignorance of the Scriptures, so it is a manifest Proof that such as make it are Strangers to *the Power of Godliness in their Hearts*. For since the Sum and Substance of Religion consists in our Recovery from our fallen Estate in *Adam*, by a *New Birth* in *Christ Jesus*, there is an absolute Necessity for us to embrace and practise the *Self-denial* before recommended. Because we have not only a new House to build, but an old one first to pull down;

we

* *Law's Christian Perfection.*

we must necessarily therefore be dead to the World, before we can *live unto God*. In short, all Things belonging to the *Old Man* must die in us, before the Things belonging to the *Spirit* can live and grow in us.

When *Jesus Christ* was *about* to make his publick Appearance, and to preach the glad Tidings of Salvation to a benighted World, his Harbinger *John Baptist* was sent to *prepare his Way before him*. In like Manner, when this same *Jesus* is about to take Possession of a converted Sinner's Heart, *Self-denial*, like *John the Baptist*, must prepare the Way before him: For we must *mourn* before we are capable of being *comforted*, we must undergo the *Spirit of Bondage*, in order to be made meet to receive *the Spirit of Adoption*.

Were we indeed in a State of Innocence, and had we, like *Adam* before his Fall, the Divine Image fully stamped upon our Souls, we then should have no need of *Self-denial*; but since we are fallen, sickly, disordered Creatures, and this *Self-suffering*, this *Self-renunciation*, is the *indispensible Means* of *recovering* our primitive Glory; methinks in that Case, to endeavour to shake off the Difficulty attending it at first, is but too like the Obstinacy of a perverse sick Child, who nauseates and refuses the Potion reached out to it by a skilful Phyfician or tender Parent, because it is a little ungrateful to the Taste.

Had any of us seen *Lazarus* when he lay full of Sores at the Rich Man's Gate; or *Job*, when he was smitten with Ulcers, from the Crown of his Head to the Sole of his Foot: And had we at the same Time prescribed to them some healing Medi-
cines

cines, which, because they would put them to Pain, they would not apply to their *Wounds*, should we not most justly think, that they were either fond of a distemper'd Body, or were not sensible of their Distempers? But our Souls, by Nature, are in an infinitely more deplorable Condition than the Bodies of *Job* or *Lazarus*, when full of Uicers and Boils: For, alas! *our whole Head is sick, and our whole Heart faint; from the Crown of the Head to the Sole of the Foot, we are full of Wounds and Bruises and putrifying Sores, and there is no Health in us.* And *Jesus Christ*, like a good Physician, in the Gospel Doctrine of *Self-denial*, presents us with a spiritual *Medicine to heal our Sicknefs*: But if we will neither receive nor apply it, it is a Sign we are not sensible of the *Wretchedness* of our State, or else that we are *unwilling to be made whole.*

Even *Naaman's* Servants could say, when he refused, pursuant to *Elijah's* Orders, to wash in the River *Jordan*, that he might cure his Leprosy, *Father, if the Prophet had bid thee do some great Things, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean?* And may not I very properly address myself to you in the same Manner, my Brethren? — If *Jesus Christ*, our great Prophet, had bid you to do some great and very difficult Thing, would you not have done it? Much more then should you do it, when he only bids you *deny yourselves* what would certainly hurt you if enjoyed, and behold, you shall be *made perfectly whole.*

But to illustrate this by another Comparison: In the 12th Chapter of the *Acts*, we read, that St. *Peter*

Peter was kept in Prison, and was sleeping between two Soldiers, bound with two Chains: And behold an Angel of the Lord came upon him, and smote Peter on the Side, saying, Arise up quickly: And his Chains fell off from his Hands. But had this great Apostle, instead of rising up quickly, and doing as the blessed Angel commanded him, hugged his Chains and begged that they might not be let fall from his Hands, would not any one think that he was in love with Slavery, and deserved to be *executed* next Morning? And does not the Person who refuses to *deny himself*, act as inconsistently as this Apostle would have done if he had neglected the Means of his Deliverance? For our Souls by Nature, are in a spiritual Dungeon, Sleeping and fast bound between the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, not with Two but Ten Thousand Chains of Lusts and Corruptions. Now *Jesus Christ*, like *St. Peter's* good Angel, by his Gospel comes and opens the Prison Door, prescribes *Self-denial*, Mortification, and *Renunciation of ourselves and the World*, as so many spiritual Keys which will unlock our *Shackles*, make them fall off from our Hearts, and so restore us to *the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God*. But if we will not arise quickly, gird up the Loins of our Mind, and *deny ourselves*, as he has commanded, are we not in love with Bondage, and deserve never to be delivered from it.

Indeed I will not affirm that this Doctrine of *Self-denial* appears in this just Light to every one. No, I am sensible that to the *Natural Men* it is *Foolishness*; and to the *young Convert* an *hard Saying*. But what says our Saviour? *If any Man will*

will do my Will, he shall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. This, my dear Friends, is the best, the only Way of Conviction: Let us up and be doing; let us arise quickly and *deny ourselves*, and the Lord Jesus will remove those Scales from the Eyes of our Minds, which now like so many Veils, hinder us from seeing clearly the Reasonableness, Necessity, and inexpressible Advantage of the Doctrine that has been now delivered. Let us but once thus *show ourselves Men*, and then the Spirit of God will move on the Face of our Souls, as he did once upon the Face of the great Deep; and cause them to emerge out of that confused Chaos, in which they are most certainly now involved, if we are Strangers and Enemies to *Self-denial* and the Cross of Christ.

But notwithstanding this Doctrine of *Self-denial* is, when rightly understood, so reasonable and beneficial; yet many, it is to be feared, like the young Man in the Gospel, are ready to go away sorrowful.

III. Proceed we therefore now to the *Third* and *last* general Thing proposed; viz. To offer some Considerations, which may serve as so many Motives to reconcile us to, and *quicken us* in the Practice of this Duty of *Self-denial*.

2. And the first Means I shall recommend to you, in order to reconcile you to this Doctrine is, to meditate frequently on the Life of our blessed Lord and Master Jesus Christ. Oh! may we often think on Him our grand Exemplar! Fol-
low

low him from his Cradle to the Cross, and see what a *self-denying Life* He led! And shall not we drink of the Cup that he drank of, and be baptized with the Baptism that He was baptized with? Or think we that *Jesus Christ* did and suffered every thing in order to have us excused, and exempted from Sufferings? No, far be it from any sincere *Christian* to judge after this Manner: For St. Peter tells us, *He suffered for us leaving us an Example, that we should follow his Steps.* Had Christ, indeed, like those that sat in Moses's Chair, laid heavy Burthens of Self-denial upon us, (supposing they were heavy, which they are not) and refused to touch them himself with one of his Fingers; we might have had some Pretence to complain: But since He has enjoined us nothing but what he has first put in Practice himself, *Thou art inexcusable, O Disciple, whoever thou art*, who wouldst be above thy persecuted self-denying Master: And thou art no good and faithful Servant, who art unwilling to suffer and sympathize with thy mortified, heavenly-minded Lord.

2. Next to the Pattern of our Blessed Master, think often on the Lives of the glorious Company of the *Apostles*, the goodly Fellowship of the *Prophets*, and the noble Army of *Martyrs*; who by a constant looking to the Author and Finisher of our Faith, have fought the good Fight, and are gone before us to inherit the Promises. View again and again, how holily, how self-denyingly, how unblameably they lived: And if Self-denial was necessary for them, why not for us also? Are we not Men of like Passions with them? Do we not live in the same wicked World as they did? Have

we not the same good Spirit to assist, support, and purify us, as they had? And is not the same eternal Inheritance reached out, as a Reward of our *Self-denial* and *the Renunciation of the World*, as was offered to them? And if we have the same Nature to change, the same wicked World to withstand, the same good Spirit to help, and the same Eternal Crown to reward our Obedience; why should not we lead the same Lives as they did? Do we think they did Works of Supererogation? If not, why don't we do as they did? Or why does the Church set a-part Festivals to commemorate the Deaths and Sufferings of the Saints, but in order to excite us *to follow them as they did Christ?*

3. *Thirdly*, Think often on the Pains of Hell: Consider, whether it is not better to cut off a Right Hand or Foot, and pull out a Right Eye, if they offend us (or cause us to sin) *rather than to be cast into Hell, into the Fire that never shall be quenched; where the Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched.* Think how many thousands there are now *reserved* with damned Spirits in *Chains of Darknes* unto the *Judgment of the Great Day*, for not complying with the Precept in the Text. And think withal that This, this must be our own Case shortly, unless we are wise in Time, and submit to those easy Conditions our Saviour has prescribed us, in order to avoid it. Think you they now imagine *Jesus Christ* to be an hard Master; or rather think you not they would give ten thousand times ten thousand Worlds, could they but return to Life again, and take *Christ's* easy Yoke upon them? and can we dwell with everlasting

ing Burnings more than *they*? No; if we cannot bear this Precept, *Come, deny yourselves, take up your Crosses*; how shall we bear this irrevocable Sentence, *Depart from me, ye Cursed, into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels*? But I hope those, amongst whom I am now preaching the Kingdom of God, are not so disingenuous as to need to be driven to their Duty by the Terrors of the Lord, but rather desire to be drawn by the Cords of Love.

Lastly, therefore, and to conclude, — often meditate on the Joys of Heaven: Think, think with what unspeakable Glory those happy Souls are now incircled, who when on Earth were called to *deny themselves* as well as we, and were not disobedient to that Call: Lift up your Hearts frequently towards the Mansions of eternal Bliss, and with an Eye of Faith, like the great St. *Stephen*, see the Heavens opened, and the Son of Man with his glorious Retinue of departed Saints sitting and solacing themselves in eternal Joys, and with unspeakable Comfort looking back on their past *Sufferings* and *Self-denials*, as so many glorious Means which exalted them to *such a Crown*. Hark! methinks I hear them chanting forth their everlasting *Hallelujahs*, and spending an eternal Day in echoing forth triumphant Songs of Joy. And do you not long, my Brethren, to join this heavenly Choir? Do not your Hearts burn within you? *As the Hart panteth after the Water Brooks*, do not your Souls *so long after* the blessed Company of these *Sons of God*? Behold then a heavenly Ladder reached down to you, by which you may climb to this Holy Hill. *If any Man will come*
after

after them, let him deny himself and follow them. It was this, my Brethren, exalted the Holy *Jesus* himself, as Man, to sit at the Right Hand of his adorable Father. By this alone every Saint that ever lived *ascended into the Joy of their Lord:* And by *this* we, even *we* also may be lifted up into the same most blissful Regions, there to enjoy an eternal Rest with the People of God, and join with them in singing *Doxologies and Songs of Praise,* to the Everlasting, Blessed, All-glorious, most Adorable Trinity, for ever and ever.

Which God of his infinite Mercy grant &c.

SERMON

S E R M O N I V.

T H E

Neceſſity and Benefits

O F

R E L I G I O U S S O C I E T Y ;

O R,

S O C I A L R E L I G I O N

Recommended

From Scripture, Reason, and the Advan-
tages of it to C H R I S T I A N S.

*Heb. x. 25. Not forſaking the aſſembling of our-
ſelves together, as the Manner of ſome is ; but ex-
horting one another, and ſo much the more as ye
ſee the Day approaching.*

By GEORGE WHITEFIELD, A.B.
of Pembroke-College, Oxford.

L O N D O N :

Printed for C. DAVIS, at D'Anvers's-Head,
in Chancery-Lane.

M D C C X X X I X

SERMON IV

THE

PROPHET

ISAIAH

CHAPTER

XXXIII

1784

NEW YORK



S E R M O N IV.

The *Necessity* and *Benefits* of R E- L I G I O U S S O C I E T Y.

ECCLES. iv. 9, 10, 11, 12.

*Two are better than One, because they have a good
Reward for their Labour.*

*For if they fall, the One will lift up his Fellow :
But Woe be to him that is alone when he falleth ;
for he hath not another to help him up.*

*Again, if Two lie together, then they have Heat ;
but how can One be warm alone ?*

*And if One prevail against him, Two shall with-
stand him ; and a Threefold Cord is not quickly
broken.*



AMONG the many Reasons assign-
able for the sad Decay of *True*
Christianity, perhaps the neglecting
to *assemble ourselves together*, in *Reli-
gious Societies*, may not be one of the
least. That I may therefore do my
Endeavour towards promoting so excellent a
Means of Piety, I have selected a Passage of
A 2 Scripture

Scripture drawn from the Experience of the wisest Men; which being enlarged on and illustrated, will fully answer my present Design; that being to shew, in the best Manner I can, the *Necessity* and *Benefits* of *Society* in general, and of *Religious Society* in particular.

Two are better than One, &c.

From which Words I shall take Occasion to prove,

First, The Truth of the Wise Man's Assertion, viz. *Two are better than One*, and that in Reference to *Society* in general, and *Religious Society* in particular.

Secondly, To assign some Reasons why *Two are better than One*, especially as to the last Particular. 1. Because Men can raise up one another when they chance to slip: *For if they fall, the One will lift up his Fellow.* 2. Because they can impart Heat to each other: *Again, if Two lie together, then they have Heat; but how can One be warm alone?* 3. Because they can secure each other from those that do oppose them: *And if one prevail against him, Two shall withstand him; and a Threefold Cord is not quickly broken.* From hence,

Thirdly, I shall take Occasion to shew the Duty incumbent on every Member of a *Religious Society*.

Fourthly and lastly, I shall draw an Inference or two from what shall have been said; and then conclude with a Word or two of Exhortation from the Whole.

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First then, I am to prove the Truth of the Wise Man's Assertion, viz. that *Two are better than One*, and that in Reference to Society in particular.

And how can this be done better than by shewing that it is absolutely necessary for the Welfare both of the Bodies and Souls of Men? Indeed, if we look upon Man as he came out of the Hands of his Maker, we imagine him to be *perfect, entire, lacking nothing*. But God, whose *Thoughts are not as our Thoughts*, saw something still wanting to make *Adam* happy. And what was that? Why, an *Help* meet for him. For thus speaketh the Scripture: *And the Lord said, It is not good that the Man should be alone, I will make an Help meet for him.*

Observe, God said, *It is not good*, thereby implying that the Creation would have been imperfect, in *some Sort*, unless an *Help* was found out for *Adam*. And if this was the Case of Man before the Fall; if an *Help* was *meet* for him in a State of Perfection; surely since the Fall, when we come naked and helpless out of our Mother's Womb, when our Wants increase with our Years, and we can scarcely subsist a Day without the mutual Assistance of each other, well may we say, *It is not good for Man to be alone.*

Society then, we see, is absolutely necessary in respect to our *bodily* and *personal* Wants. If we carry our View farther, and consider Mankind as divided into different Cities, Countries, and Nations, the Necessity of it will appear yet more evident. For how can Communities be kept up, or Commerce carried on, without *Society*? Certainly not at all, since Providence seems wisely to

have assigned a particular Product to almost each particular Country, on Purpose, as it were, to oblige us to be social; and hath so admirably mingled the Parts of the whole Body of Mankind together, *that the Eye cannot say to the Hand, I have no Need of Thee; nor again, the Hand to the Foot, I have no Need of Thee.*

Many other Instances might be given of the *Necessity of Society*, in reference to our *bodily, personal, and national Wants*. But what are all these when *weighed in the Ballance of the Sanctuary*, in Comparison of the infinite greater Need of it, with respect to the *Soul*? It was chiefly in regard to this better Part, no doubt, that God said, *It is not good for the Man to be alone.* For, let us suppose *Adam* to be as happy as may be, placed as the Lord of the Creation in the *Paradise* of God, and spending all his Hours in adoring and praising the Blessed Author of his Being; yet as his Soul was the very Copy of the *Divine Nature*, whose peculiar Property it is to be communicative, *without the Divine All-Sufficiency* he could not be compleatly happy, because he was alone and incommunicative, nor even Content in *Paradise* for want of a *Partner* in his Joys. God knew this, and therefore said, *It is not good that the Man shall be alone. I will make a Help meet for him.* And though this proved a fatal Means of his falling; yet that was not owing to any natural Consequence of *Society*; but partly to that cursed Apostate, who *craftily lies in wait to deceive*; partly to *Adam's* own Folly, in rather chusing to be miserable with one he loved, than trust in God to raise him up another Spouse.

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If we reflect indeed on that familiar Intercourse our first Parents could carry on with Heaven, in a State of Innocence, we shall be apt to think he had as little Need of *Society*, as to his *Soul*, as before we supposed him to have, in respect to his *Body*. But yet, as God and the Holy Angels were so far above him on the one Hand, and the Beasts so far beneath him on the other, there was nothing like having one to converse with, who was *Bone of his Bone, and Flesh of his Flesh*.

Man, then, could not be fully happy, we see, even in *Paradise*, without a Companion of his own Species, much less now he is driven out. For, let us view him a little in his natural Estate now, since the Fall, as *having his Understanding darkened, his Mind alienated from the Life of God*; as no more able to see his Way wherein he should go, than a Blind Man to describe the Sun: That notwithstanding this, he must receive his Sight e're he can see God: And that if he never sees him, he never can be happy. Let us view him, I say, in this Light or rather this Darknefs, and deny the *Necessity of Society* if we can. A Divine Revelation we find is absolutely necessary, we being by Nature as unable to know, as we are to do our Duty. And how shall we learn except one teach us? But was God to do this himself, how should we, with *Moses*, exceedingly quake and fear? Nor would the Ministry of Angels in this Affair be without too much Terror. It is necessary, therefore (at least God's Dealing with us hath shewed it to be so) that we should be *drawn with the Cords of a Man*. And that a Divine Revelation being granted, we should use one another's Assistance, under God, to instruct each other in the Knowledge

ledge, and to exhort one another to the Practice of those Things which belong to our everlasting Peace. This undoubtedly is the great End of Society intended by God since the Fall, and a strong Argument it is, why *Two are better than One*, and why we should *not forsake the assembling ourselves together*.

But farther, let us consider ourselves as *Christians*, as having this natural Veil, in some measure, taken off from our Eyes by the Assistance of God's Holy Spirit, and so enabled to see what he requires of us. Let us suppose ourselves in some Degree to have *tasted the good Word of Life*, and to have felt the Powers of the World to come, influencing and moulding our Souls into a religious Frame: To be fully and heartily convinced that we are *Soldiers* lifted under the *Banner of Christ*, and have proclaimed open War at our *Baptism against the World, the Flesh and the Devil*; and have, perhaps, frequently renewed our Obligations so to do, by partaking of the *Lord's Supper*: That we are surrounded with Millions of Foes without and infested with a Legion of Enemies within: That we are commanded to shine as Lights in the World, in the midst of a crooked and perverse Generation: That we are travelling to a long Eternity, and need all imaginable Helps to shew us, and encourage us in our Way thither. Let us, I say reflect on all this, and then how shall each of us cry out, Brethren, what a necessary Thing it is to meet together in *Religious Societies*?

The Primitive *Christians* were fully sensible of this, and therefore we find them continually keeping up Communion with each other: For what says the Scripture? *They continued stedfastly in the Doctrine*

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Doctrine and Fellowship, Acts ii. 42. Peter and John were no sooner dismissed by the Great Council, than they haste away to their Companions. *And being set at Liberty*, says the Text, *they came to their own, and told them all these Things which the High Priest had said unto them*, Acts iv. 23. Paul, as soon as converted, *tarried three Days with the Disciples that were at Damascus*, Acts ix. 19. And Peter afterwards, when released from Prison, immediately goes to the House of Mary, where there were great *Multitudes assembled, praying*, Acts xii. 12. And it is reported of *Christians* in After-Ages, that they used to assemble together before Day-light, to sing a Psalm to Christ as God. So precious was the *Communion of Saints* in those Days.

If it be asked, what Advantage we shall reap from such a Procedure now? I answer, much every Way. *Two are better than One, because they have a good Reward for their Labour; For if they fall, the One will lift up his Fellow; but Woe be to him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lye together, then they have Heat; but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, Two shall withstand him; and a Three-fold Cord is not quickly broken.*

Which directly leads me to my Second general Head, under which I was to assign some Reasons why *Two are better than One*, especially in *Religious Society*.

1. As Man in his present Condition cannot always stand upright, but by Reason of the Frailty of
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of his Nature cannot but fail; one eminent Reason why *Two are better than One*, or, in other Words, one great Advantage of *Religious Society* is, *That when they fall, the One will lift up his Fellow.*

And an excellent Reason this, indeed! For alas! When we reflect how prone we are to be drawn into Error in our Judgments, and into Vice in our Practice; and how unable, at least how very unwilling, to espy or correct our own Miscarriages; when we consider how apt the World is to flatter us in our Faults, and how few there are so kind as to tell us the Truth; what an inestimable Privilege must it be to have a Set of true, judicious, hearty Friends about us, continually watching over our Souls, to inform us where we have fallen, and warn us that we fall not again for the future. Surely it is such a Privilege that (to use the Words of an *eminent Christian*) we shall never know the Value of, till we come to Glory.

But this is not all; for supposing that we could always stand upright, yet whosoever reflects on the Difficulties of Religion in general, and his own Propensity to Lukewarmness and Indifference in particular, will find that he must be *zealous* as well as *steady*, if ever he expects to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Here then, the Wise Man points out to us another excellent Reason why *Two are better than One*. Again, says he, *If Two lye together, then they have Heat; but how can One be warm alone?*

Which was the next Thing to be considered under the Second General Head, viz. to assign a second Reason why *Two are better than One*, because they can impart *Heat* to each other.

It is an Observation no less true than common, That kindled Coals, if placed asunder, soon go out, but if heaped together, quicken and enliven each other, and afford a lasting Heat. The same will hold good in the Case now before us. If *Christians*, kindled by the Grace of God, unite, they will quicken and enliven each other; but if they separate and keep asunder, no marvel if they soon grow cool or tepid. If *Two* or *Three* meet together in *Christ's* Name, *they will have Heat*; but how can *One* be warm alone?

Observe, *How can one be warm alone?* The Wise Man's expressing himself by way of Question, implies an Impossibility, at least a very great Difficulty, to be warm in Religion without Company, where it may be had. Behold here, then, another excellent Benefit flowing from *Religious Society*; it will keep us *zealous*, as well as *steady*, in the Ways of Godliness.

But to illustrate this a little farther by a Comparison or two. Let us look upon ourselves (as was above hinted) as *Soldiers* lifted under *Christ's Banner*; as going out with *Ten thousand* to meet *One* that cometh against us with *twenty thousand*; as Persons that are to *wrestle not only with Flesh and Blood, but against Principalities, against Powers, and spiritual Wickednesses in High Places*. And then tell me, all ye that fear God, if it be not an Invaluable Privilege to have a Company of *Fellow Soldiers* continually about us, animating and exhorting each other to stand our Ground, to keep our Ranks, and manfully to follow the *Captain of our Salvation*, though it be through a Sea of Blood?

Lastly, Let us consider ourselves in another View before mentioned, *viz.* as Persons travelling to a *long Eternity*; as rescued by the *free Grace of God*,
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in some Measure, from our natural *Egyptian Bondage*, and marching under the Conduct of our *Spiritual Joshua*, through the *Wilderness of this World*, to the Land of our *Heavenly Canaan*. Let us farther reflect how apt we are to startle at every Difficulty; to cry, *There are Lions! There are Lions in the Way! There are the Sons of Anak* to be grappled with, e're we can possess the *promised Land*: How prone we are, with *Lot's Wife*, to look wishfully back on our *Spiritual Sodom*; or, with the foolish *Israelites*, to long again for the *Flesh-Pots of Egypt*, and to return to our former natural State of Bondage and Slavery. Consider this, my Brethren, and see what a blessed Privilege it will be to have a Set of *Israelites* indeed about us, always reminding us of the Folly of any such cowardly Design, and of the intolerable Misery we shall run into, if we fall in the least short of the *promised Land*.

More might be said on this Particular, did not the Limits of a Discourse of this Nature, oblige me to hasten.

3. To give a Third Reason, mentioned by the Wise Man in the Text, why *Two are better than One*; namely, because they can secure each other from Enemies without. *And if one prevail against him, yet Two shall withstand him; and a Threesfold Cord is not quickly broken.*

Hitherto we have considered the Advantage of *Religious Societies*, as a great Preservative against falling (at least dangerously falling) into Sin and Lukewarmness, and that too from our own Corruptions. But what says the Wise Son of *Sirach*? *My Son, when thou goest to serve the Lord, prepare thy Soul for Temptation*: And that not only from inward, but outward Foes; particularly from

from those two grand Adversaries, the *World* and the *Devil*: For no sooner will thine Eye be bent Heavenward, but the former will be immediately diverting it another Way, telling thee thou needest not be *singular* in order to be *religious*; that one may be a *Christian* without going so much out of the *Common Road*.

Nor will the *Devil* be wanting in his *artful* Insinuations, or *impious* Suggestions, to divert or terrify thee from pressing forward, *that thou mayest lay hold on the Crown of Life*. And if he cannot prevail this Way, he will try another undiscerned, but withal more successful, he will employ, perhaps, some of the nearest Relatives, or most powerful Friends, (as he set *Peter* on our *blessed Master*) who will always be bidding thee *spare thyself*; telling thee thou needest not take so much Pains; that it is not so difficult a Matter to get to Heaven as some People would make of it, nor the Way so narrow as others imagine it to be.

But see here the Advantage of Religious Company; for supposing thou findest thyself thus surrounded on every Side, and unable to withstand such *horrid* (though seemingly *friendly*) Counsels, *haste* away to thy Companions, and they will teach thee a truer and better Lesson; they will tell thee, that thou must be *singular* if thou wilt be *religious*; and that it is as impossible for a *Christian*, as for a City set upon a Hill, to be hid: That if thou wilt be an *almost Christian* (and as good be none at all) thou mayest live in the same idle, indifferent Manner, as thou seest most other People do: But if thou wilt be not only *almost*, but *altogether a Christian*, they will inform thee thou must go a great deal further: That thou must not only *faithfully seek*, but *earnestly strive to enter in at the strait Gate*:

Gate: That there is but *One Way* now to Heaven as formerly, viz. through the narrow Passage of of a *sound Conversion*: And that in order to bring about this mighty Work, thou must undergo a constant, but necessary Discipline of Fasting, Watching, and Prayer. And that therefore, the only Reason why these Friends give thee such Advice, is, because they are not willing to take so much Pains themselves; or, as our Saviour told *Peter* on a like Occasion, because they *savour not the Things that be of God, but the Things that be of Men.*

This then, is another excellent Blessing arising from *Religious Society*, that Friends can hereby secure each other from those that oppose them. The *Devil* is fully sensible of this, and therefore he has always done his utmost to suppress, and put a Stop to the *Communion of Saints*. This was his grand Artifice at the first planting of the *Gospel*; to persecute the Professors of it, in order to separate them. Which, though God, as he always will, over-ruled for the better; yet, it shews, what an Enmity he has against *Christians assembling themselves together*. Nor has he yet left off his old Stratagem; it being his usual Way to entice us by *ourselves*, in order to tempt us; where, by being destitute of one another's Helps, he hopes to lead us *captive at his Will*.

But, on the contrary, knowing his own Interest is strengthened by *Society*, he would first persuade us to neglect the *Communion of Saints*, and then bid us *stand in the Way of Sinners*, hoping thereby to put us into the *Seat of the Scornful*. *Judas* and *Peter* are melancholy Instances of this. The former had no sooner left his Company at Supper, but he went out and betrayed his Master: And the
dismal

dismal Downfal of the latter, when he would venture himself amongst a Company of Enemies, plainly shews us what the *Devil* will endeavour to do, when he gets us by ourselves. Had *Peter* kept his own Company, he might have kept his Integrity; but a *single Cord*, alas, how quickly was it broken? Our *Blessed Saviour* knew him full well, and therefore it is very observable, that he always sent out his *Disciples Two by Two*.

And now, after so many Advantages to be reaped from *Religious Society*, may we not very justly cry out with the Wise Man in my Text, *Woe be to him that is alone; for when he falleth, he hath not another to lift him up?* When he is cold, he hath not a Friend to warm him; when he is assaulted, he hath not a *Second* to help him to withstand his Enemy.

III. I now come to my *Third* general Head, under which was to be shewn the several Duties incumbent on every Member of a *Religious Society*, as such, which are three. 1. *Mutual Reproof*; 2. *Mutual Exhortation*; 3. *Mutual assisting and defending each other*.

1. *Mutual Reproof*. *Two are better than One; for when they fall, the One will lift up his Fellow*.

Now, Reproof may be taken either in a more extensive Sense, and then it signifies our raising a Brother by the gentlest Means, when he falls into Sin and Error; or in a more restrained Signification, as reaching no farther than those little Mis-carriages, which unavoidably happen in the most holy Men living.

The Wise Man in the Text, supposes all of us subject to both: *For when they fall* (says he, thereby

by implying that each of us may fall) *the One will lift up his Fellow*. From whence we may infer, that *when any Brother is overtaken with a Fault, be that is spiritual* (that is, regenerate, and knows the Corruption and Weakness of Human Nature) *ought to restore such a one in the Spirit of Meekness*. And why he should do so, the Apostle subjoins a Reason, *considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted*; i. e. considering thy own Frailty, lest thou also fall by the like Temptation.

We are all frail unstable Creatures; and it is merely owing to the *Free Grace and good Providence of God* that we *run not into the same Excess of Riot* with other Men. Every offending Brother, therefore, claims our *Pity* rather than our *Resentment*; and each Member should strive who should be most forward, as well as most gentle, in restoring him to his former State.

But supposing a Person not to be *overtaken*, but to fall *wilfully* into a Crime; yet who art thou that deniest Forgiveness to thy offending Brother? *Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall*. Take ye, Brethren, the holy Apostles as eminent Examples for you to learn by, how you ought to behave in this Matter. Consider how quickly they joined the Right Hand of Fellowship with Peter, who had so wilfully denied his Master: For we find *John* and him together but two Days after, *John* xx. 2. And ver. 19. we find him assembled with the rest. So soon did they forgive, so soon associate with their sinful, yet relenting Brother — *Let us go and do likewise*.

But there is another kind of Reproof incumbent on every Member of a *Religious Society*; namely, *a gentle Rebuke for some Miscarriages or other, which, though not actually sinful, yet may become*
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the Occasion of Sin. This indeed seems a more easy, but perhaps will be found a more difficult Point than the former: For when a Person has really sinned, he cannot but own his Brethrens Reproof to be just; whereas, when it was only for some little Misconduct, the Pride that is in our Natures, will scarce suffer us to brook it. But however ungrateful this Pill may be to our Brother, yet if we have any Concern for his Welfare, it must be administered by some friendly Hand or other. By all Means then let it be applied; only, like a skilful Physician, *gild* over the ungrateful Medicine, and endeavour, if possible, to *deceive* thy Brother into Health and Soundness. *Let all Bitterness and Wrath, and Malice, and Evil speaking, be put away* from it. Let the Patient know his Recovery is the only Thing aimed at, that thou delightest not *causelessly* to grieve thy Brother; and then thou canst not want Success.

2. *Mutual Exhortation* is the second Duty resulting from the Words of the Text — *Again, if Two lye together, then they have Heat.*

Observe here again, the Wise Man supposes it as impossible for religious Persons to meet together, and not to be the warmer for each other's Company, as for two Persons to lye in the same Bed, and yet freeze with Cold. But now, how is it possible to communicate Heat to each other, without mutually *stirring up the Gift of God* which is in us, by Brotherly Exhortation? Let every Member then of a Religious Society write that zealous Apostle's Advice on the Tables of his Heart; *See that ye exhort, and provoke one another to Love, and to good Works; and so much the more as you see the Day of the Lord approaching.* Believe me, Brethren, we have

Need of Exhortation to rouse up our sleepy Souls, to set us upon our Watch against the Temptations of the *World*, the *Flesh*, and the *Devil*; to excite us to renounce ourselves, to take up our Crosses, and follow our Blessed Master, and the glorious Company of Saints and Martyrs, *who through Faith have fought the Fight, and are gone before us to inherit the Promises.* A third Part, therefore, of the Time wherein a *Religious Society* meets, seems necessary to be spent in this important Duty: For what avails it to have our Understandings enlightened by pious Reading, unless our Wills are at the same Time inclined, and inflamed by mutual Exhortations, to put it in Practice? Add to this, that this is the Way both to receive and impart Light, and the only Means to preserve and increase that Warmth and Heat which each Person first brought with him; God so ordering this, as all other spiritual Gifts, that *to him that hath, i. e. improves and communicates what he hath, shall be given; but him that hath it not, i. e. does not improve the Heat he hath, shall be taken away even that which he seemed to have.* So needful, so essentially necessary, is Exhortation to the Good of Society.

3. Thirdly and lastly, The Text points out another Duty incumbent on every Member of a *Religious Society*, viz. to defend each other from those that do oppose them. *And if one prevail against him, Yet two shall withstand him; and a threefold Cord is not quickly broken.*

Here the Wise Man takes it for granted, that Offences will come, nay, and that they may prevail too. And this is no more than our *Blessed Master* has long since told us. Not indeed, that there is
any

any Thing in *Christianity itself* that has the least Tendency to give Rise to, or promote such Offences: No, on the contrary, it breathes nothing but Unity and Love.

But so it is, that ever since the fatal Sentence pronounced by God, after our first Parents Fall, *viz. I will put Enmity between thy Seed and her Seed; He that is born after the Flesh*, that is, the unregenerate unconverted Sinner, has in all Ages *persecuted him that is born after the Spirit*: And so it always will be. Accordingly we find an early Proof given of this in the Instance of *Cain and Abel*; and of *Ismael and Isaac*; of *Jacob and Esau* afterwards. And, indeed, the whole *Bible* contains little else but an History of the great and continued Opposition between the Children of this World and the Children of God. The first *Christians* were remarkable Examples of this; and though those troublesome Times, blessed be God, are now over, yet the Apostle has laid it down as a general Rule, and all that are sincere can experimentally prove the Truth of it. That *they that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must* (to the End of of the World, in some Degree or other) *suffer Persecution*. That therefore this may not make us desert our Blessed Master's Cause, every Member should unite their Forces, in order to stand against it. And for the better effecting this, each would do well, from Time to Time, to communicate his Experiences, Grievances, and Temptations, and beg his Companions (first asking God's Assistance, without which all is nothing) to administer Reproof, Exhortation, or Comfort, as his Case requires: So that *if One cannot prevail against it, yet Two shall withstand it; and a Threefold* (much less a many-fold) *Cord will not be quickly broken*.

IV. But

IV. But it is Time for me to proceed to the *Fourth* general Thing proposed, viz. to draw an Inference or two from what has been said.

1. And first then, if *Two are better than One*, and the Advantages of *Religious Society* are so many and so great, then it is the Duty of every true *Christian* to set on Foot, establish and promote, as much as in him lyes, *Societies* of this Nature. And I believe we may venture to affirm, that if ever a Spirit of true *Christianity* is revived in the World, it must be brought about by some such Means as this. Motives, surely, cannot be wanting, to stir us up to this commendable and necessary Undertaking: For, granting all hitherto advanced to be of no Force, yet methinks the single Consideration that great Part of our Happiness in Heaven will consist in the *Communion of Saints*; or that the Interest as well as Piety of those Sectarists that differ from us, is strengthened and supported by nothing more than their frequent Meetings; either of these Considerations, I say, one would think, should induce us to do our utmost to copy after their good Example, and settle a lasting and pious *Communion of the Saints* on Earth. Add to this, that we find the Kingdom of Darkness established daily by such like Means; and shall not the Kingdom of *Christ* be set in Opposition against it? Shall the Children of *Belial* assemble and strengthen each other in Wickedness; and shall not the Children of God unite, and strengthen themselves in Piety? Shall *Societies* on *Societies* be countenanced for midnight Revellings, and the promoting of *Vice*, and scarcely one be found intended for the Propagation of Virtue?—Be astonished, O Heavens at this!

2. But

2. But this leads me to a second Inference; namely, to warn Persons of the great Danger those are in, who either by their Subscriptions, Presence, or Approbation, promote *Societies* of a quite opposite Nature to Religion.

And here I would not be understood to mean only those Publick Meetings which are designed manifestly for nothing else but Revellings and Banquetings, for Chambering and Wantonness, and at which a modest *Heathen* would blush to be present; but also those seemingly *innocent* Entertainments and Meetings which the *politer* Part of the World are so very fond of, and spend so much Time in: But which notwithstanding, keep as many Persons out of a Sense of *True Religion*, as Intemperance, Debauchery, or any other Crime whatever. Indeed, whilst we are in this World, we must have proper Relaxations, to fit us both for the Business of our Profession, and Religion. But then, for Persons who call themselves *Christians*, that have solemnly vowed at their *Baptism*, to renounce the *Vanities of this sinful World*; that are commanded in Scripture to *abstain from all Appearance of Evil, and to have their Conversation in Heaven*. For such Persons as these to support Meetings, that (to say no worse of them) are vain and trifling, and have a natural Tendency to draw off our Minds from God, is absurd, ridiculous, and sinful. Surely *Two are not better than One* in this Case: No; it is to be wished there was not *one* to be found concerned in it. The sooner we forsake the *assembling ourselves together* in such a Manner, the better; and no matter how quickly the Cord that holds such *Societies* (was it a Thousand-fold) is broken.

But

But you, Brethren, have not so learnt *Christ*: But, on the contrary, like true Disciples of your Lord and Master, have by the Blessing of God (as this Evening's Solemnity abundantly testifies) happily formed yourselves into such *Societies*, which if duly attended on, and improved, cannot but strengthen you in your Christian Warfare, and *make you fruitful in every good Word and Work*.

What remains for me to do, but, as was proposed, in the last Place, to close up what has been said, in a Word or two, by Way of Exhortation from the whole, and to beseech you, in the Name of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, to go on in the Way you have begun; and by a constant conscientious Attendance on your respective *Societies*, to discountenance Vice, encourage Virtue, and *build each other up in the Knowledge and Fear of God*.

Only permit me to *stir up your pure Minds*, by way of Remembrance, and to exhort you, *if there be any Consolation in Christ, any Fellowship of the Spirit*, again and again to consider, that as all *Christians* in general, so all Members of *Religious Societies* in particular, are in an especial Manner, as Houses built upon an Hill; and that therefore it highly concerns you to *walk circumspectly* towards those that are without, and to *take heed to yourselves*, that your *Conversation*, in common Life, *be as becometh* such an open and peculiar Profession of the *Gospel of Christ*: Knowing that the Eyes of all Men are upon you, narrowly to inspect every Circumstance of your Behaviour; and that every notorious wilful Miscarriage of any single Member will, in some Measure redound to the Scandal and Dishonour of your Fraternity.

of RELIGIOUS SOCIETY. 23

Labour, therefore, my beloved Brethren to let your Practice correspond to your Profession: And think not that it will be sufficient for you to plead at the last Day, Lord have we not assembled ourselves together *in thy Name*, and enlivened each other, by *singing Psalms, and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs?* For verily, I say unto you, notwithstanding this, our Blessed Lord will bid you *depart from him*; nay, that you shall *receive a greater Damnation*, if, in the midst of these great Pretensions, you are found to be *Workers of Iniquity*.

But God forbid that any such Evil should befall you; that there should be ever a *Judas*, ever a Traitor amongst such distinguished Followers of our *Common Master*. No, on the contrary, the Excellency of your Rules, the Regularity of your Meetings, and more especially your pious Zeal in assembling in such a publick and solemn Manner so frequently in the Year, persuade me to think, that you are willing, not barely to *seem*, but to *be in Reality, Christians*; and hope to be found at the *Last-Day*, what you would be esteemed *now, viz. holy, sincere Disciples of a Crucified Redeemer*.

Oh, may you always continue thus minded! and make it your daily, constant Endeavour, both by Precept and Example, to turn all you converse with, more especially those of your own *Societies*, into the same most blessed Spirit and Temper. Thus will you adorn the Gospel of our *Lord Jesus Christ* in all Things: Thus will you anticipate the Happiness of a future State; and by attending on, and improving *the Communion of Saints* on Earth, make yourselves meet to join the Communion

nion and Fellowship of the Spirits of just Men made perfect, of the Holy Angels, nay of the ever Blessed and Eternal God in Heaven.

Which God of his infinite Mercy grant through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, Three Persons, and One Eternal God, be ascribed, as is most due, all Honour and Praise, Might, Majesty and Dominion, now and for ever.

SERMON

S E R M O N V.

I N T E R C E S S I O N

E V E R Y

C H R I S T I A N ' S D U T Y :

O R,

P R A Y E R and S U P P L I C A T I O N
for Others, as well as Ourselves,

A n E S S E N T I A L P A R T

O F T H E

C H R I S T I A N R E L I G I O N.

*Rom. i. 9. For God is my Witness, whom I serve with
my Spirit in the Gospel of his Son, that without
ceasing I make Mention of you always in my Prayers.*

By *GEORGE WHITEFIELD*, A.B.
of *Pembroke-College, Oxford.*

L O N D O N :

Printed for C. DAVIS, at *D'Anvers's-Head*,
in *Chancery-Lane.*

M D C C X X X I X.

2 E R M O N

INTEREST

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UNITED METHODIST

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S E R M O N V.

INTERCESSION every *Christian's* DUTY.

I T H E S S. V. 25.

Brethren, Pray for us.



IF we enquire, why there is so little *Love* to be found amongst *Christians*, why the very Characteristick, by which every one should know that we are Disciples of the Holy *Jesus*, is almost banished out of the *Christian World* — We shall find it, in a great Measure, owing to a Neglect or superficial Performance of the most Godlike Part of secret Prayer *Intercession*, or imploring the Grace or Mercy of God in behalf of others.

Some forget this Duty of Praying for others, because they seldom remember to pray for themselves: And even good People, who are constant in Praying to their Father which is in Heaven, are often

often so constrained and selfish in their Addresses to the Throne of Grace, that they do not enlarge their Petitions for the Welfare of their Fellow *Christians* as they ought; and thereby fall short of attaining that *Christian* Charity, that unfeigned Love of their Brethren, which their sacred Profession obliges them to aspire after, and without which, though they would *bestow all their Goods to feed the Poor, and even give their Bodies to be burned, yet it would profit them nothing.*

Since then these Things are so, I shall from the Words of the Text (though originally intended to be more confined) endeavour to shew,

- I. *First*, That it is every *Christian's* Duty to pray for Others, as well as for himself.
- II. *Secondly*, Who are Those that we ought to pray for, and in what Manner we should do it. And,
- III. *Thirdly*, I shall offer some Motives to excite all *Christians* to abound in this great Duty of *Intercession.*

- I. *First* then, I shall endeavour to shew, That it is every *Christian's* Duty to pray for Others, as well as for Himself.

Now Prayer is a Duty founded on Natural Religion; the very *Heathens* never neglected it, though many *Christian Heathens* amongst us do—: And it is so essential to *Christianity*, that you might as reasonably expect to find a living Man without Breath, as a true *Christian* without the Spirit of Prayer and Supplication — Thus, no
sooner

Every CHRISTIAN'S DUTY. 5

sooner was *St. Paul* converted, but *behold he prayeth*, saith the Lord Almighty. And thus will it be with every Child of God, as soon as he becomes such: Prayer being truly called, *The natural Cry of the New-born Soul*.

For in the Heart of every True Believer there is a Heavenly Tendency, a Divine Attraction, which as sensibly draws him to converse with God, as the Load-stone attracts the Needle.

A deep Sense of their own Weakness, and of *Christ's* Fulness; a strong Conviction of their Natural Corruption, and of the Necessity of renewing Grace; will not let them *rest from crying Day and Night* to their Almighty Redeemer, that the Divine Image, which they lost in *Adam*, may through His All-powerful Mediation, and the sanctifying Operations of his blessed Spirit, be begun, carried on, and fully perfected both in their Souls and Bodies.

Thus earnest, thus importunate, are all sincere *Christians* in praying for themselves: But then, not having so lively, lasting, and deep a Sense of the Wants of their *Christian* Brethren, they are for the most Part too remiss and defective in their Prayers for *them*——Whereas, was the *Love of God* shed abroad in our Hearts, and did we love our Neighbour in that Manner in which the Son of God our Saviour *loveth us*, and according to his Command and Example, we could not but be as importunate for their Spiritual and Temporal Welfare, as for their own; and as earnestly desire and endeavour that others should share in the Benefits of the Death and Passion of *Jesus Christ* as we ourselves.

6 INTERCESSION

Let not any one think, that this is an uncommon Degree of Charity; an high Pitch of Perfection, which every one cannot attain unto; since it is no such Thing. — For if we are all commanded to *Love our Neighbour* (that is every Man) even *as ourselves*, nay to *Lay down our Lives for the Brethren*; then it is the Duty of *all* to pray for their Neighbours as much as for themselves, and by all possible Acts and Expressions of Love and Affection towards them, at all Times, to shew their Readiness even to lay down their Lives for them, if ever it should please God to call them to it.

Our Blessed Saviour as He hath set us an Example, that we should follow his Steps in every Thing else, so hath he more especially in This. — For in that most Divine, that most Perfect and inimitable Prayer (recorded in the 17th of St. *John*) which he put up just before His Passion, we find but *few* Petitions for His own, though *many* for his Disciples Welfare: And in that most perfect Form which He has been pleased to prescribe us, we are taught to say, — not *My*, but *Our Father*, — Thereby to put us in mind, that whenever we approach the Throne of Grace, we ought to pray, — not in our own Name alone, but in the Name of all our Brethren in *Christ*.

Intercession then is certainly a Duty incumbent upon all *Christians*.

II. Whom we are to intercede for, and how this Duty is to be performed, comes next to be considered, — under my *Second General Head*.

1. And

Every CHRISTIAN'S DUTY. 7

1. And first, our *Intercession* must be universal — *I will*, says the Apostle, *that Prayers, Supplications, and Intercession, be made for All Men.* For as God's Mercy is over *All his Works*, as Jesus Christ died to redeem a People out of all Nations and Languages; so, we should pray, that *All Men may come to the Knowledge of the Truth, and be saved.* Many precious Promises are made in Holy Writ, that *the Gospel shall be published through the whole World, that the Earth shall be covered with the Knowledge of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Sea.* And therefore it is our Duty not to confine our Petitions to our own Nation, but to pray that all those Nations, who now sit in Darkness and in the Shadow of Death, may have the glorious Gospel shine out upon Them, as well as upon Us. But you need not that any Man should teach you This, since Ye yourselves are taught of God, even of Jesus Christ himself, to pray, that His Kingdom may come; Part of the Meaning of which Petition is, That God's Ways may be known upon Earth, and His Saving Health among all Nations.

2. Next to the Praying for all Men, we should, according to St. Paul's Rule, pray for Kings; particularly, for our present Sovereign King GEORGE, and all that are put in Authority under Him: That we may lead quiet Lives, in all Godliness and Honesty — For, if we consider how heavy the Burden of Government is, and how much the Welfare of any People depends on the Zeal and godly Conversation of Those that have the Rule over them: If we set before us the many Dan-

gers and Difficulties, to which Governors by their Station are exposed, and the continual Temptations they lye under to Luxury and Self-Indulgence; we shall not only pity, but pray for Them, ——— That He who preserved *Eſther*, *David*, and *Joſiab*, *unſpotted from the World*, amidſt the Grandeur of a Court, and gave Succeſs to their Deſigns, would alſo preserve them Holy and Unblameable, and proſper all the Works of their Hands upon them.

3. But, *Thirdly*, You ought, in a more eſpecial Manner, to pray for thoſe; whom the *Holy Ghoſt hath made Overſeers over You*. This is what *St. Paul* begs, again and again, of the Churches to whom he writes: — *Brethren*, ſays he in the Text, *Pray for Us*, and again, in his Epistle to the *Ephesians* — *Praying always*, ſays he, *with all Manner of Supplication; and for me alſo, that I may open my Mouth boldly, to declare the Myſtery of the Goſpel*. And in another Place, to expreſs his Earneſtneſs in this Requeſt, and the great Importance of their Prayers to Him ——— He bids the Church *ſtrive*, (or, as the original Word ſignifies, *Be in an Agony*) *together with Him in their Prayers*. And ſurely, if the great *St. Paul*, that Chosen Veſſel, that Favourite of Heaven, needed the moſt importunate Prayers of his *Chriſtian Converts*; ——— much more do the ordinary Miniſters of the Goſpel ſtand in Need of the *Interceſſion* of their reſpective Flocks.

And I cannot but in a more eſpecial Manner inſiſt upon this Branch of your Duty; becauſe it is a Matter of ſuch Importance: For no doubt,
much

Every CHRISTIAN'S DUTY. 9

much Good is frequently with-held from many, by Reason of their neglecting to pray for their Ministers, which they would have received had they prayed for them as they ought. Not to mention, the People often complain of the want of diligent and faithful Pastors. — But how do they deserve Good Pastors, who will not earnestly pray to God for *such*?

The Church has set a-part Four Seasons in the Year for this Purpose, and to call down a Blessing on those who are to be ordained to any Holy Function: But by how very few are the *Ember Days* observed! And if we will not *Pray to the Lord of the Harvest*, can it be expected, *He will send forth Labourers into his Harvest*?

Besides, What Ingratitude is it, not to pray for your Ministers! For shall They watch and labour in the Word of Doctrine for you, and for your Salvation, and shall not you pray for Them in Return? If *any* bestow Favours on your Bodies, you think it right, meet and your bounden Duty, to pray for them; and shall not they be remembered in your Prayers, who daily feed and nourish your Souls? Add to all this, that Praying for your Ministers, will be a manifest Proof of your believing — That though *Paul* plant, and *Apollos* Water, yet it is God alone who giveth the Increase. And you will also find it the best Means you can use, to promote your own Welfare: Because God, in Answer to your Prayers, may impart a double Portion of his Holy Spirit to them, whereby they will be qualified to deal out to you larger Measures of Knowledge in Spiritual Things, and

be enabled more skilfully to divide the Word of Truth.

Would Men but constantly observe this Direction, and when their Ministers are praying in their Name to God, — humbly beseech Him to perform all their Petitions: Or, when They are speaking in God's Name to them, ——— Pray that *the Holy Ghost may fall on them that hear the Word*; we should then find a more visible good Effect of their Doctrine, and a greater mutual Love between Ministers and their People. For Ministers Hands would then be held up by the People's Intercession, and the People will never dare to vilify or traduce Those who are the constant Subjects of their Prayers.

4. Next to our Ministers, our *Friends* claim a Place in our *Intercession*; but then we should not content ourselves with Praying in general Terms for them, but suit our Prayers to their particular Circumstances. When *Miriam* was afflicted with a Leprosy from God, *Moses* cried and said, *Lord heal her*: And when the Nobleman came to apply to *Jesus Christ*, in behalf of his child, he said, *Lord, my little Daughter lyeth at the Point of Death. I pray Thee come and heal her*. In like Manner, when any of our Friends are under any afflicting Circumstances, we should endeavour to pray for Them, with a particular Regard to those Circumstances. For Instance, Is a Friend sick? We should pray, That if it be God's good Pleasure, it may not be unto Death; but if otherwise, That he would give him Grace to take his Visitation, that, after this painful Life ended, he may dwell with him in Life everlasting. Is a Friend in Doubt in a Matter?

Matter? We should lay his Case before God; as *Moses* did that of the Daughters of *Zelophebad*, and pray, that God's Holy Spirit may lead Him unto all Truth. Is he in Want? We should pray, That his Faith may never fail, and that in God's due Time he may be relieved. And in all other Cases, we should not pray for our Friends only *in Generals*, but suit our Petitions to Their *particular Sufferings and Afflictions*; for otherwise, we may never ask perhaps for the Things our Friends *most want*.

It must be confessed, that such a Procedure will oblige us sometimes to break from the Forms we use; but if we accustom ourselves to it, and have a deep Sense of what we ask for, the most illiterate *Christians* will not want Words to express themselves.

We have many noble Instances in Holy Scripture of the Success of this Kind of *particular Intercession*; but none more remarkable than That of *Abraham's* Servant in the Book of *Genesis*——who being sent to seek a Wife for his Son *Isaac*, prays in a most particular Manner in his Behalf.——And the Sequel of the Story informs us how remarkably his Prayer was answered. And did *Christians* now pray for their Friends in the same particular Manner, and with the same Faith as *Abraham's* Servant did for his Master: they would, no doubt, in many Instances, receive as visible Answers, and have as much Reason to bless God for Them as He had.

5. But farther, as we ought thus to intercede for our Friends, so in like Manner must we also pray for our *Enemies*. *Bless them that curse you,*
says

says *Jesus Christ*, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you: Which Commands he enforced in the strongest Manner by His own Example, when in the very Agonies and Pangs of Death, He prayed even for his *Murderers*, — *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!* — This, it must needs be confessed, is a difficult Duty, yet not impracticable to those, who have renounced the Things of this present Life, (from an inordinate Love of which alone all Enmities arise) and who knowing the terrible *Woes* denounced against Those who offend *Christ's Little Ones*, can, out of real Pity, and a Sense of their Danger, pray for those by whom such Offences come.

6. Lastly, to conclude this Head, — We should *intercede* for All that are any Ways afflicted in Mind, Body, or Estate; — for All who desire, and stand in need of our Prayers: — And for All who do not pray for themselves.

And Oh! that All who hear me, would set apart some Time every Day for the due Performance of this most necessary Duty! In Order to which,

I shall now proceed to the *Third General Thing* proposed; namely,

III. To shew the Advantages, and offer some Considerations to excite you to the Practice of *Daily Intercession*.

1. And First, it will fill your Hearts with *Love to one another*. — He that every Day intercedes at the Throne of Grace for all Mankind, cannot

cannot but in a short Time be filled with Love and Charity to *all*: And the frequent Exercise of his Love in this Manner, will insensibly enlarge his Heart, and make him Partaker of that exceeding Abundance of it which is in *Christ Jesus* our Lord! Envy, Malice, Revenge, and such like hellish Tempers, can never long harbour in a gracious Intercessor's Breast; — But he will be filled with Joy, Peace, Meekness, Long-suffering, and all other Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit. By frequently laying his Neighbour's Wants before God, he will be touched with a Fellow-feeling of them; — He will rejoice with those that do rejoice, and weep with those that weep. — Every Blessing bestowed on Others, instead of exciting Envy in him, will be looked on as an Answer to his particular Intercession, and fill his Soul with *Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory*.

Indeed I will not affirm, that this Blessed Temper of Mind can be acquired all at once: No, — as other Graces, so must this *Christian Love* be obtained by Degrees. But do you abound in Acts of general and particular Intercessions; and when you hear of your Neighbour's Faults, instead of relating them to, and exposing them before others, — Lay them in secret before God, and beg of him to correct and amend them. When you hear of a notorious Sinner, instead of thinking, *You do well to be angry*; beg of *Jesus Christ* to convert and make him a Monument of his free Grace: And you cannot imagine what a Blessed Alteration this Practice will make in your Heart, and how much you will increase Day by Day in
in

the Spirit of Love and Meekness towards all Mankind!

But farther to excite you to the constant Practice of this *Duty of Intercession*; consider the many Instances given us in Holy Scripture, of the Power and Efficacy of it. Great and Excellent Things are there recorded as the Effects of this Divine Employ. It has stopt Plagues, it has opened and shut Heaven; and has frequently turned away God's Fury from his People. How was *Abimelech's* House freed from the Disease God sent amongst them, at the *Intercession* of *Abraham*; and when *Phineas* stood up and prayed, how soon did the Plague cease! When *Daniel* humbled and afflicted his Soul, and interceded for the Lord's Inheritance, how quickly was an Angel dispatched to tell him, *His Prayer was heard!* And, to mention but one Instance more. How does God own Himself as it were quite overcome with the Importunity of *Moses*, when he was interceding for his idolatrous People, *Let me alone*, says God!

This sufficiently shews, I could almost say, the Omnipotency of *Intercession*, and how we may, like *Jacob*, wrestle with God, and by an holy Violence prevail both for Ourselves and Others. And no doubt 'tis owing to the secret and prevailing *Intercessions* of the few Righteous Souls who still remain among us, that God has yet spared this miserable sinful Nation: For were there not some such Faithful ones, like *Moses*, left to stand in the Gap, — We should soon be destroyed even as was *Sodom*, and reduced to Ashes like unto *Gomorrah*.

Every CHRISTIAN'S DUTY. 15

But, to stir you up yet farther to this Godlike Exercise of *Intercession*, consider that, in all probability, it is the frequent Employment even of the Glorified Saints: For though they are delivered from the Burthen of the Flesh, and restored to the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God; yet as their Happiness cannot be perfectly consummated 'till the Resurrection of the Last Day, when all their Brethren will be glorified with them — We cannot but think they are often importunate in beseeching our Heavenly Father, shortly to accomplish the Number of his Elect, and to hasten his Kingdom. And shall not we, who are on Earth, be often exercised in this Divine Employ with the Glorious Company of *the Spirits of Just Men made perfect*? Since our Happiness is so much to consist in the Communion of Saints in the Church Triumphant *above*, shall we not frequently *intercede* for the Church Militant *here below*; and earnestly beg, that we may all be One, even as the Holy *Jesus* and his Father are One, that we may also be made perfect in One?

To provoke you to this Great Work and Labour of Love,— Remember, that it is the never-ceasing Employments of the Holy and Highly exalted *Jesus* Himself, who sits at the Right Hand of God to hear all our Prayers, and to make continual *Intercession* for us! So that He who is constantly employed in *interceding* for Others, is doing *that* on Earth, which the Eternal Son of God is always doing in Heaven.

Imagine therefore, when you are lifting up Holy Hands in Prayer for one another,— That you see the Heavens opened, and the Son of God in all His Glory, as the Great High Priest of your Salvation

Salvation, offering up and pleading for you the All-sufficient Merit of his Sacrifice before the Throne of his Heavenly Father! — Join then Your *Intercession* with His, and beseech Him that *they* may through Him come up as Incense, and be received as a Sweet-smelling Savour, acceptable in the Sight of God! This Imagination will strengthen your Faith, excite a holy Earnestness in your Prayers, and make you wrestle with God, as *Jacob* did, when he saw Him Face to Face and his Life was preserved; as *Abraham*, when he pleaded for *Sodom*; and as *Jesus Christ* himself, when He prayed, being in an Agony, so much the more earnestly the Night before his bitter Passion!

And now, Brethren, What shall I say more, since *You are taught of Jesus Christ Himself to abound in Love*, and in this *Good Work of praying* for one another! — However, I cannot but recommend to you one general Means in order to make your *Intercession* more effectual, that is, — To lead such Lives, as may make your Prayers *accepted in the Beloved*. The *effectual fervent Prayer of a Righteous Man availeth much*, saith St. *James*. *You shall go to my Servant Job, says God, and He shall pray for You*. It is This, it is This, my Brethren, must make your *Intercessions* pierce the Clouds! For *the Prayers of the Wicked are an Abomination to the Lord*. Would you therefore prevail with God for Others, *Be Holy, even as God is Holy* yourselves: Labour daily after fresh Degrees of Grace, and your *Intercessions* will acquire fresh Degrees of Acceptance and Efficacy in Heaven.

Do

Every CHRISTIAN'S DUTY. 17

Do but *walk as becometh the Gospel of Jesus Christ*; [be but in earnest about *Working out your own eternal Salvation*; and your *Intercessions* will Then come forth as *Incense before God*, and the *lifting up of your Hands* be as an *Evening Sacrifice* — Though ever so mean, though as poor as *Lazarus*, you will then become *Benefactors* to all Mankind; Thousands, and Twenty times Ten Thousands, will then be *Blessed for your Sakes*! And after you have employed a few Years in this Divine Exercise *here*, you will be translated to that Happy Place, where you have so often wished others might be advanced; and be exalted to sit at the Right Hand of our All-powerful, All-prevailing *Intercessor*, in the Kingdom of his Heavenly Father *hereafter*.

However, I cannot but in an especial Manner press This upon you *now*, because all ye, amongst whom I have now been Preaching, in all Probability, will see me no more — For I am now going (I trust under the Conduct of God's most Holy Spirit) from you, knowing not what shall befall me: I need therefore your most importunate *Intercessions*, that nothing may move me from my Duty, and that I may not count even my Life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my Course with Joy, and the Ministry I have received of the Lord *Jesus*, to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God.

Whilst I have been here, to the best of my Knowledge, I have not failed to declare unto you the whole Will of God. — and though my Preaching may have been a *Savour of Death*
unto

unto Death to some; yet I trust it has been also a Savour of Life unto Life to others: And therefore I earnestly hope that those will not fail to remember me in their Prayers. As for my own Part, the many unmerited Kindnesses I have received from you, will not suffer me to forget you: Out of the Deep therefore, I trust, shall my Cry come unto God; and whilst the Winds and Storms are blowing over me, unto the Lord will I make my Supplication for you. For it is but a little while, and *We must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ*; where I must give a strict Account of the Doctrine I have preached, and You of your Improvement under it. And Oh! that I may never be called out as a swift Witness, against any of those my dear Brethren in *Christ*, for whose Salvation I have sincerely, though too faintly, longed and laboured!

It is true, I have been censured by some, as acting out of sinister and selfish Views: *But it is a small Matter with me not to be judged by Man's Judgment*; I hope my Eye is single; but I beseech you, Brethren, by the Mercies of God in *Christ Jesus*, pray that it may be more so! and that I may increase with the Increase of Grace in the Knowledge and Love of God, through *Jesus Christ* our Lord.

And now, Brethren, what shall I say more? I could wish to continue my Discourse much longer: For I can never fully express the Desire of my Soul towards you! — Finally therefore, Brethren, *Whatsoever Things are Holy, whatsoever Things are Pure, whatsoever Things are Honest,*

Every CHRISTIAN'S DUTY. 19

Honest, whatsoever Things are of good Report; if there be any Consolation in Christ, if any Fellowship of the Spirit, if any Hopes of our appearing to the Comfort of each other at the awful Tribunal of Jesus Christ, — Think of the Things that you have heard, and of those which your Pastors have declared; and will yet declare unto you; and continue under their Ministry to work out your own Salvation with Fear and Trembling: So that whether I should never see you any more, or whether it shall please God to bring me back again at any Time, I may always have the Satisfaction of knowing that your Conversation is such as becometh the Gospel of Christ.

I almost persuade myself, that I could willingly suffer all Things, so that it might any ways promote the Salvation of your precious and immortal Souls; and I beseech you, as my last Request, Obey them that have the Rule over you in the Lord; and be always ready to attend on their Ministry, as it is your bounden Duty. Think not that I desire to have myself exalted at the Expence of another's Character, but rather think this, Not to have any Man's Person too much, in Admiration; but esteem all your Ministers highly in Love, as they justly deserve, for their Work's Sake.

And now, Brethren, I commend you to God, and to the Word of His Grace, which is able to build you up, and give you an Inheritance amongst all them that are sanctified. May God reward you for all your Works of Faith, and Labour of Love; and make you to abound more and more in every good Word and Work towards all Men. May
he

he truly convert all that have been convinced, and awaken all that are *Dead in Trespasses and Sins!* May he confirm all that are wavering! And may you all go on from one Degree of Grace unto another, till you arrive unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of *Christ*; and thereby be made meet to stand before that God, *in whose Presence is the Fulness of Joy, at whose Right Hand there are Pleasures for ever more!*

Amen! Amen!

SERMON

S E R M O N VI.

T H E

Great D U T Y

O F

F A M I L Y R E L I G I O N :

O R,

J O S H U A ' s Resolution worthy
the Imitation of every Master of
a F A M I L Y .

Job. i. 5. And it was so, when the Days of their Feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the Morning, and offered Burnt-Offerings according to the Number of them all; for Job said, It may be that my Sons have sinned, and cursed God in their Hearts. Thus did Job continually.

By GEORGE WHITEFIELD, A.B.
of Pembroke-College, Oxford.

L O N D O N :

Printed for C. DAVIS, at D'Anvers's-Head,
in Chancery-Lane.

M DCC XXXIX.

SERMON VI

THE

GREAT DUTY

FAMILY RELATIONS

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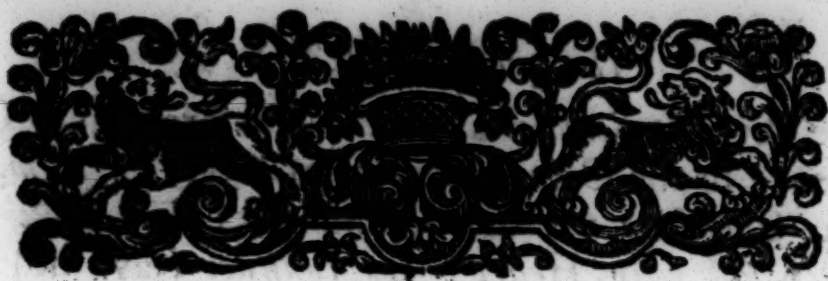
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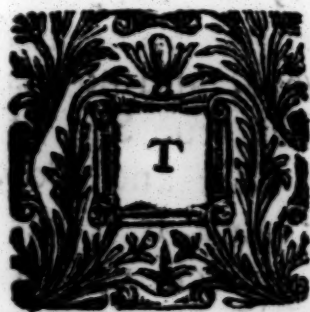


S E R M O N VI.

The great Duty of FAMILY-RELIGION.

JOSHUA xxiv. 15

As for me and my House, we will serve the Lord.



THESE Words contain the holy Resolution of pious *Joshua*, who having in a most moving affectionate Discourse recounted to the *Israelites* what great Things God had done for them, in the Verse immediately going before the Text, comes to draw a proper Inference from what he had been delivering; and acquaints them, in the most pressing Terms, that since God had been so exceeding gracious unto them, they could do no less than, out of Gratitude for such uncommon Favours and Mercies, dedicate both themselves and Families to his Service. *Now therefore*, says he, Verse 14. *fear the Lord, and serve him in Sincerity and Truth, and put away the Gods which your Fathers served on the other Side of the Flood.* And by the same engaging Motive does the

the Prophet *Samuel* afterwards enforce their Obedience to the Commandment of God, 1 *Sam.* xii. 24. *Only fear the Lord, and serve him in Truth, with all your Heart; for consider (says he) how great Things he hath done for you.* But then, that they might not excuse themselves (as too many might be apt to do) by his giving them a bad Example, or think he was laying heavy Burdens upon them, whilst he himself touched them not with one of his Fingers, he tells them in the Verse out of which the Text is taken, that whatever Regard they might pay to the Doctrine he had been preaching, yet he (as all Ministers ought to do) was resolved to live up to and practise it himself: *Chuse you therefore, says he, whom you will serve, whether the Gods which your Fathers served, or the Gods of the Amorites, in whose Land ye dwell: But as for me and my House, we will serve the Lord.*

A Resolution this worthy of *Joshua*, and no less becoming, no less necessary for every true Son of *Joshua*, that is intrusted with the Care and Government of a Family in our Day: And, if it was ever seasonable for Ministers to preach up, or People to put in Practice *Family Religion*, it was never more so than in the present Age; since it is greatly to be feared, that out of those many Households that call themselves *Christians*, there are but few that serve God in their respective Families as they ought.

It is true indeed, visit our Churches, and you may perhaps see something of the *Form of Godliness* still subsisting among us; but even that is scarcely to be met with in private Houses. So that were the blessed Angels to come, as in the patriarchal Age, and observe our spiritual Oeconomy

at Home, would they not be tempted to say as *Abraham* said to *Abimelech*, *Surely, the Fear of God is not in this Place?* Gen. xx. 12.

How such a general Neglect of *Family-Religion* first began to overspread the *Christian* World, is difficult to determine. As for the primitive *Christians*, I am positive it was not so with them: No, they had not so learned *Christ*, as falsely to imagine Religion was to be confined solely to their Assemblies for publick Worship; but, on the contrary, behaved with such Piety and exemplary Holiness in their private Families, that *St. Paul* often styles their House a Church. *Salute such a one*, says he, *and the Church which is in his House.* And, I believe, we must for ever despair of seeing a primitive Spirit of Piety revived in the World, till we are so happy as to see a Revival of primitive *Family-Religion*; and Persons unanimously resolving with good old *Joshua*, in the Words of the Text, *As for me and my House, we will serve the Lord.*

From which Words I shall beg Leave to insist on these Three Things.

- I. *First*, That it is the Duty of every Governor of a Family to take Care, that not only he himself, but also that those committed to his Charge, *serve the Lord.*
- II. *Secondly*, I shall endeavour to shew after what Manner a Governor and his Household ought to *serve the Lord.*
- III. *Thirdly*, and *lastly*, I shall offer some Motives in order to excite all Governors, with their respective Households, to *serve the Lord* in the Manner that shall be recommended.

And *First*, I am to shew that it is the Duty of every Governor of a Family to take Care.

that not only he himself, but also that those committed to his Charge, should serve the Lord.

And this will appear, if we consider that every Governor of a Family ought to look upon himself as obliged to act in three Capacities: As a Prophet, to instruct; as a Priest, to pray for and with; as a King, to govern, direct, and provide for them. It is true indeed the latter of these, viz. their kingly Office, they are not so frequently deficient in, (nay in this they are generally solicitous;) but as for the two former, viz. their priestly and prophetick Office, like Gallio, they care for no such Things. But however indifferent some Governors may be about it, yet they may be assured, that God will require a due Discharge of these Offices at their Hands. For if, as the Apostle argues, *He that does not provide for his own House, in temporal Things, has denied the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel*; to what greater Degree of Apostasy must he have arrived, who takes no Thought to provide for the spiritual Welfare of his Family!

But farther, Persons are generally very liberal of their Invectives against the Clergy, and think they justly blame the Conduct of that Minister who does not take heed to and watch over the Flock, of which the *Holy Ghost* has made him Overseer: But may not every Governor of a Family be in a lower Degree liable to the same Censure, who takes no Thought for those Souls that are committed to his Charge? For every House is as it were a little Parish, every Governor (as was before observed) a Priest, every Family a Flock: And if any of them perish through the Go-

FAMILY-RELIGION 7

Governor's Neglect, their Blood will God require at their Hands.

Was a Minister to disregard teaching his People publicly, and from House to House, and to excuse himself by saying, that he had enough to do to work out his own Salvation with Fear and Trembling, without concerning himself with that of others; would not any one be apt to think such a Minister to be like the unjust Judge, *One that neither feared God, nor regarded Man?* And yet, odious as such a Character would be, it is no worse than that Governor of a Family deserves, who thinks himself obliged only to save his own Soul, without paying any regard to the Souls of his Household. For (as was above hinted) every House is as it were a Parish, and every Master is concerned to secure, as much as in him lies, the Spiritual Prosperity of every one under his Roof, as any Minister whatever is obliged to look to the Spiritual Welfare of every individual Person under his Charge.

What Precedents Men, who neglect their Duty in this Particular, can plead for such Omission, I cannot tell: Doubtless not the Example of holy *Job*, who was so far from imagining that he had no Concern, as Governor of a Family, with any one's Soul but his own, that the Scripture acquaints us, *When the Days of his Children's Feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and offered Burnt-Offerings according to the Number of them all; for Job said, it may be that my Sons have sinned and cursed God in their Hearts: Thus did Job continually.* Nor can they plead the Practice of good old *Joshua*, whom, in the Text, we find as much concerned for his Household's Welfare as his own. Nor lastly, that of *Cornelius*, who feared

8 *The great DUTY of*

God, not only himself, but with *all his House*: And were *Christians* but of the same Spirit of *Job*, *Josua*, and the *Gentile Centurion*, they would act as *Job*, *Josua*, and *Cornelius* did.

But, alas! if this be the Case, and all Governors of Families ought not only to serve the Lord themselves, but likewise to see that their respective Households do so too; what will then become of those who do not only neglect serving God themselves, but also make it their Business to ridicule and scoff at any of their House that do? Who are not content with *not entering into the Kingdom of Heaven themselves*; but *those also that are willing to enter in they hinder*. Surely such Men are Factors for the Devil indeed. Surely their Damnation slumbereth not: For although God, in his good Providence, may suffer such Stumbling-blocks to be put in his Children's Ways, and suffer their greatest Enemies to be those of their own Households, for a Trial of their Sincerity, and Improvement of their Faith; yet we cannot but pronounce a *Woe* against those Masters *by whom such Offences come*. For if those that only take Care of their own Souls can scarcely be saved, where will such monstrous profane and wicked Governors appear?

But hoping there are but few of this unhappy Stamp, proceed we now to the

II. *Second Thing* proposed, viz. To shew after what Manner a Governor and his Household ought to *serve the Lord*.

1. And the *first Thing* I shall mention is reading the Word of God. This is a Duty incumbent on every private Person. *Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have Eternal Life*, is a Precept

cept given by our Blessed Lord indifferently to all: But much more so ought every Governor of a Family to think it in a peculiar Manner spoken to himself, because (as hath been already proved) he ought to look upon himself as a Prophet, and therefore, agreeable to such a Character, as bound to instruct those under his Charge in the Knowledge of the Word of God.

This we find was the Order God gave his peculiar People of *Israel*: For thus spake his Representative *Moses*, *Deuteronomy* vi. 6, 7. *These Words*, that is, the Scripture Words, *which I command thee this Day, shall be in thy Heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy Children*, that is, as it is generally explained, *Servants*, as well as *Children*, *and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy House*. From whence we may infer, that the only Reason, why so many neglect to read the Words of Scripture diligently to their Children is, because the Words of Scripture are not in their Hearts: For if they were, out of the Abundance of the Heart their Mouth will speak.

Besides, *Servants* as well as *Children* are, for the Generality, very ignorant, and mere Novices in the Laws of God: And how shall they know, unless some one teach them? And what more proper to teach them by, than the lively Oracles of God, *which are able make them wise unto Salvation*? And who more proper to instruct them by these lively Oracles, than Parents and Masters, who (as hath been more than once observed) are as much concerned to feed them with spiritual as with bodily Bread, Day by Day.

But if these Things be so, what a miserable Condition are those unhappy Governors in, who are so far from feeding those committed to their Care with the sincere Milk of the Word, to the

Intent they may grow thereby, that they neither search the Scripture themselves, nor are careful to explain them to others? Such Families must be in a happy Way indeed to do their Master's Will, who take such prodigious Pains to know it! Would one not imagine that they had turned Converts to the Church of *Rome*; that they thought *Ignorance* the Mother of *Devotion*; that those were to be condemned as Hereticks who read their *Bibles*? And yet how few Families are there amongst us, who do not act after this unseemly Manner! But *shall I praise them in this? I praise them not: Brethren, the Thing ought not so to be.*

2. Pass we on now to the second Means whereby every Governor, and his Household ought to serve the Lord, viz. *Family Prayer.*

This is a Duty, though as much neglected, yet as absolutely necessary as the former. *Reading* is a good Preparative for *Prayer*, as *Prayer* is an excellent Means to render *Reading* effectual. And the Reason why every Governor of a Family should join both these Exercises together is plain, because a Governor of a Family cannot perform his *Priestly Office* (which we before observed, he is in some Degree invested with) without performing this Duty of *Family Prayer.*

We find it therefore remarked, when Mention is made of *Cain* and *Abel's* offering Sacrifices, that they brought them. But to whom did they bring them? Why, in all Probability to their Father *Adam*, who as Priest of the Family, was to offer Sacrifice in their Names. And so likewise ought every spiritual Son of the second *Adam*, who is intrusted with the Care of an Household, to offer up the spiritual Sacrifices of Supplications and Thanksgivings, acceptable to God through *Jesus Christ,*

Christ, in the Presence and Name of all who wait upon, or eat Meat at his Table.

Thus we read our Blessed Lord behaved, when he tabernacled amongst us: For it is said often, that *he was alone* praying with his twelve Disciples, which was then his little Family. And he himself has promised a particular Blessing to joint Supplications: *For wheresoever, says he, two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them.* And again, *if two or three are agreed touching any Thing they shall ask, it shall be given them.* Add to this, that we are commanded by the Apostle to *pray always, with all Manner of Supplications*, which doubtless includes *Family Prayer*. And holy *Josbua*, when he set up the good Resolution in the Text, that he and his Household would *serve the Lord*, certainly resolved withal to pray with his Family, which is one of the best Testimonies they could give of their serving him.

Besides, there are no Families but what have some common Blessings, of which they have been all Partakers, to give Thanks for; some common Crosses and Afflictions, which they are to pray against, some common Sins which they are all to lament, and bewail: But how can this be done without joining together in one common Act of Humiliation, Supplication, and Thanksgiving, is difficult to devise.

From all which Considerations put together, it is evident, that *Family Prayer* is a great and necessary Duty; and consequently, those Governors that neglect it are certainly without Excuse. And it is much, if they live without *Family Prayer*, they live without *God in the World*.

And yet such an hateful Character as this is, it is to be feared, that, was God to find out an Angel to destroy us, as he did once to destroy the *Egyptian* First-born, and withal give him a Commission, *as then*, to spare no Houses but where they saw the Blood of the Lintel sprinkled on the Door-post, so *now* to let no Families escape but those that called upon him in Morning and Evening Prayer; few would remain unhurt by his avenging Sword. *Christians* shall I term such Families, or *Heathens*? Doubtless they deserve not the Name of *Christians*; and *Heathens* will surely rise up in Judgment against such profane Families of this Generation: For they had always their Household Gods, whom they worshipped, and whose Assistance they frequently invoked. And a pretty Pass those Families surely are arrived at, who must be sent to School to *Pagans*. But will not the Lord be avenged on such profane Households as these? Will he not pour out his Fury upon those that call not upon his Name?

3. But it is Time for me to hasten to the third and last Means I shall recommend, whereby every Governor ought with his Household to *serve the Lord*, viz. by *catechizing* and *instructing* their Children and Servants, and bringing them up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord.

That this, as well as the two former, is a Duty incumbent on every Governor of an House, appears from that famous Encomium or Commendation God gives of *Abraham*. I know, says the most High, *that he will command his Children and his Household after him to keep the Way of the Lord, to do Justice and Judgment*. And indeed scarce any thing is more frequently pressed upon us in Holy Writ, than this Duty of *Catechizing*. Thus
says

says God in a Passage before cited, *Thou shalt teach these Words diligently unto thy Children.* And Parents are commanded in the *New Testament* to *breed up their Children in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord.* The Holy Psalmist acquaints us, that one great End why God did so great Wonders for his People was, *to the Intent that when they grew up they should shew their Children, or Servants, the same.* And in *Deuteronomy*, Chap. vi. at the 20th and following Verses, God strictly commands his People to instruct their Children in the true Nature of the ceremonial Worship, when they should enquire about it, as he supposed they would do, in Time to come. And if Servants and Children were to be instructed in the Nature of *Jewish* Rites, much more ought they *now* to be initiated and grounded in the Doctrines and first Principles of the Gospel of *Christ*: Not only because it is of a Revelation, which has brought Life and Immortality to a fuller and clearer Light, but also because many Seducers are gone abroad into the World, who do their utmost Endeavour to destroy not only the Superstructure, but likewise to sap the very Foundation of our most Holy Religion.

Would then the present Generation have their Posterity be true Lovers and Honourers of God, Masters and Parents must take *Solomon's* good Advice, and train up and catechize their respective Households in the Way wherein they should go.

I am aware but of one Objection that can, with any Shew of Reason, be urged against what has been advanced; which is, that such a Procedure as this will take up too much Time, and hinder Families too long from their worldly Business. But it is much to be questioned whether Persons that
start

start such an Objection are not of the same hypocritical Spirit as the Traytor *Judas*, who had Indignation against devout *Mary*, for being so profuse of her Ointment, in anointing our blessed Lord, and asked why it might not be sold for two hundred Pence, and given to the Poor. For has God given us so much Time to work for ourselves, and shall we not allow some small Pittance of it, Morning and Evening, to be devoted to his more immediate Worship and Service? Have not People read, that it is God who gives Men Power to get Wealth, and therefore that the best Way to prosper in the World is to secure his Favour? And has not our blessed Lord himself promised, that if we seek first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, all outward Necessaries shall be added unto us?

Abraham, no doubt, was a Man of as great Business as such Objectors may be; but yet he would find Time to command his Household to serve the Lord. Nay, *David* was a King, and consequently had a great deal of Business upon his Hands; yet notwithstanding, he professes that he would walk in his House with a perfect Heart. And, to instance but one more, holy *Josbua* was a Person certainly engaged very much in temporal Affairs; and yet he solemnly declares before all *Israel*, that as for him and his Household, they would serve the Lord. And did Persons but redeem their Time, as *Abraham*, *David*, or *Josbua* did, they would no longer complain that Family Duties kept them too long from the Business of the World.

III. But my Third and last general Head, under which I was to offer some Motives, in order to excite all Governors, with their respective Households, to serve the Lord in the Manner

FAMILY-RELIGION. 15

Manner before recommended, I hope, will serve instead of a thousand Arguments, to prove the Weakness and Folly of any such Objection.

1. And the first Motive I shall mention is the Duty of Gratitude, you that are Governors of Families owe to God.—Your Lot, every one must confess, is cast into a fair Ground! Providence hath given you a goodly Heritage, above many of your fellow Creatures, and therefore, out of a Principle of Gratitude, you ought to endeavour, as much as in you lies, to make every Person of your respective Household to call upon him as long as they live: Not to mention that the Authority, with which God has invested you as Parents and Governors of Families, is a Talent committed to your Trust, and which you are bound to improve to your Master's Honour. In other Things we find Governors and Parents can exercise Lordship over their Children and Servants readily, and frequently enough can say to one, *Go*, and he goeth; and to another *Come*, and he cometh; to a third, *Do this*, and he doeth it. And shall this Power be so often employed in your own Affairs, and never exerted in the Things of God? Be astonished, O Heaven, at this!

Thus did not faithful *Abraham*; no, God says, that he knew *Abraham* would *command his Servants and Children after him*. Thus did not *Joshua*: No, he was not only to walk with God himself, but to improve his Authority in making all about him do so too: *As for me and my House, we will serve the Lord*. Let us go and do likewise.

2. But *Secondly*, if *Gratitude* to God will not, methinks, *Love* and *Pity* to your Children should
move

move you, with your respective Families, to *serve the Lord*.

Most People express a great Fondness for their Children: Nay so great, that very often their own Lives are wrapped up in those of their Offspring. *Can a Woman forget her sucking Child, that she should not have Compassion on the Son of her Womb?* says God by his Prophet *Isaiab*. He speaks of it as a monstrous Thing, and scarce credible. But the Words immediately following affirm it to be possible, *Yea, they may forget*; and Experience also assures us they may. *Father and Mother* may both *forsake their Children*: For what greater Degree of Forgetfulness can they express towards them, than to neglect the Improvement of their Part, and not bring them up in the Knowledge and Fear of God?

It is true indeed, Parents seldom forget to provide for their Childrens Bodies, (though it is to be feared, some Men are so far sunk beneath the Beasts that perish, as to neglect even that) but then how often do they forget, or rather, when do they remember to secure the Salvation of their immortal Souls? But is this their Way of expressing their Fondness for the Fruit of their Bodies? is this the best Testimony they can give of their Affection to the Darling of their Hearts? Then was *Delilah* fond of *Sampson*, when she delivered him up into the Hands of the *Philistines*: Then were those *Russians* well affected to *Daniel*, when they threw him into a Den of Lions.

3. But *Thirdly*, if neither *Gratitude* to God, nor *Love* and *Pity* to your Children, will prevail on you; yet let a Principle of common *Honesty* and *Justice* move you to set up the Holy Resolution in the Text.

This

This is a Principle which all Men would be thought to act upon. But certainly, if any may be truly censured for their Injustice, none can be more liable to such Censure than those who think themselves injured if their Servants withdraw themselves from their bodily Work, and yet they in Return take no Care of their inestimable Souls. For is it just that Servants should spend their Time and Strength in their Master's Service, and Masters not at the same Time give them what is just and equal for their Service?

It is true, some Men may think they have Time enough when they give unto their Servants Food and Raiment, and say, Did not I bargain with thee for so much a Year? But if they give them no other than this, what do they less for their very Beasts? But are not Servants better than they? Doubtless, they are! And however Masters may put off their Convictions for the present, they will find a Time will come, when they shall know they ought to have given them some spiritual as well as temporal Wages, and the Cry of those that have mowed down their Fields, will enter into the Ears of the Lord of *Sabaoth*.

4. But *Fourthly*, if neither *Gratitude* to God, *Pity* to Children, nor a Principle of common *Justice* to Servants, are sufficient to balance all Objections; yet let that darling, that prevailing Motive of *Self-Interest* turn the Scale, and engage you with your respective Households to *serve the Lord*.

This weighs greatly with you in other Matters: Be then persuaded to let it have a due and full Influence on you in this: And if it has, if you have but Faith as a Grain of Mustard-Seed, how can you avoid believing that promoting *Family Religion* would be the best Means to promote your own temporal

'temporal as well as eternal Welfare? For *Godliness has the Promise of the Life that now is, as well as that which is to come.*

Besides, you all, doubtless, wish for honest Servants, and pious Children: And to have them prove otherwise, would be as great a Grief to you as it was to *Elijah* to have a treacherous *Gebazi*, or *David* to be troubled with a rebellious *Absalom*. But how can it be expected they should learn their Duty, except those set over them take Care to teach it them? Is it not as reasonable to expect you should reap where you had not sown, or gather where you had not strawed?

Did *Christianity*, indeed, give any Countenance to Children and Servants to disregard their *Parents and Masters according to the Flesh*, or represent their Duty to them as inconsistent with their entire Obedience to their *Father and Master which is in Heaven*, there might then be some Pretence to neglect instructing them in the Principles of such a Religion. But since the Precepts of this pure and undefiled Religion are all of them Holy, Just and Good; and the more they are taught their Duty to God, the better they will perform their Duties to you; methinks then to neglect the Improvement of their Souls, out of a Dread of spending too much Time in religious Duties, is acting quite contrary to your own Interest as well as Duty.

5. *Fifthly* and lastly, If neither *Gratitude* to God, *Love* to your Children, common *Justice* to your Servants, nor even that most prevailing Motive *Self-Interest*, will excite; yet let a Consideration of the *Terrors of the Lord* persuade you to put in Practice the pious Resolution in the Text. Remember the Time will come, and that perhaps very shortly, when we must all appear before the
Judgment

FAMILY-RELIGION. 19

Judgment Seat of *Christ*; where we must give a solemn and strict Account how we have had our Conversation, in our respective Families in this World. How will you endure to see your Children and Servants (who ought to be your Joy and Crown of Rejoicing in the Day of our Lord *Jesus Christ*) coming out as so many swift Witnesses against you; cursing the Father that begot them, the Womb that bore them, the Paps which they have sucked, and the Day they ever entered into your Houses? Think you not the Damnation which Men must endure for their own Sins will be sufficient, that they need load themselves with the additional Guilt of being accessory to the Damnation of others also? Oh consider this, all ye that forget to serve the Lord with your respective Households, *lest he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you!*

But God forbid, Brethren, that any such Evil should befall you: No, rather will I hope that you have been, in some Measure, convinced by what has been said of the great Importance of *Family Religion*; and therefore are ready to cry out, in the Words immediately following the Text, *God forbid that I should forsake the Lord*; and again, Verse 11. *Nay, but we will, with our several Households, serve the Lord.*

And that there may be always such a Heart in you, let me, to conclude, exhort all Governors of Families, in the Name of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, often to reflect on the inestimable Worth of their own Souls, and the infinite Ransom, even the precious Blood of *Jesus Christ*, which has been paid down for them. Remember, I beseech you remember, that you are fallen Creatures, that you are by
Nature

Nature lost to and estranged from God; and that you can never be restored to your primitive Happiness, till by being born again of the Holy Ghost, you arrive at your primitive State of Purity, have the Image of God re-instamped upon your Souls, and are thereby made meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance with the Saints in Light. Do, I say, but seriously and frequently reflect on, and act as Persons that believe such important Truths, and you will no more neglect your Family's Spiritual Welfare than your own. No, the *Love of God*, which will then be *shed abroad in your Hearts*, will *constrain you* to do your utmost to preserve them: And the deep Sense of God's free Grace in *Christ Jesus*, (which you will then have) in calling you, will excite you to do your utmost to save others, especially those of your own Household. And though, after all your pious Endeavours, some may continue unreformed; yet you will have this comfortable Reflection to make, that you did what you could to make your Families *religious*: And therefore may rest assured of sitting down in the Kingdom of Heaven with *Abraham, Joshua, and Cornelius*, and all the godly Householders, who in their several Generations shone forth as so many Lights in their respective Households upon Earth.

S E R M O N . VII.

THE HEINOUS SIN OF PROFANE

Curſing and Swearing :

O R,

The COMMON SWEARER
deſteſtable in the Sight of GOD
and Man.

*Thou ſhalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God
in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltleſs
that taketh his Name in vain. Third Com-
mandment.*

By GEORGE WHITEFIELD, A.B
of Pembroke-College, Oxford:

L O N D O N :

Printed for C. DAVIS, at D'Anvers's-Head,
in Chancery-Lane.

M DCC XXXIX.

SERMON VII.

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S E R M O N VII.

The Heinous Sin of Profane CUR-
SING and S W E A R I N G.

M A T T H. v. 34.

But I say unto you, Swear not at all.



A M O N G the many heinous Sins for which this Nation is grown infamous, perhaps there is none more crying, but withal more common, than the abominable Custom of *profane Swearing and Cursing*. Our Streets abound with Persons of all Degrees and Qualities, who are continually provoking the Holy One of *Israel* to Anger by their detestable Oaths and Blasphemies: And our very Children, *out of whose Mouths*, the Psalmist observes in his Days, *was perfected Praise*, are now grown remarkable for the quite opposite ill Quality of *Cursing and Swearing*.

Swearing. This cannot but be a melancholy Prospect for every sincere and honest Minister of *Jesus Christ*, to view his Fellow *Christians* in; and such as will put him on contriving some Means to prevent the spreading at least of so growing an Evil; knowing that the Lord (without Repentance) will assuredly visit for these Things. But alas! what can he do? Publick Animadversions are so neglected amongst us, that where shall we find a common Swearer punished as the Laws direct? And as for private Admonition, Men are now so *hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin*, that to give them sober and pious Advice, and to shew them the Evil of their Doings, is but like *casting Pearls before Swine, they only turn again and rent you*. Since Matters then are come to this Pass, all that we can do is this, that as we are appointed Watchmen and Ambassadors of the Lord, it is our Duty from Time to Time to *shew the People their Transgression, and warn them of their Sin*; so that *whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, we however may deliver our own Souls*. That I therefore may discharge my Duty in this Particular, give me Leave, in the Name of God, humbly to offer to your most serious Consideration some few Observations on the Words of the Text, in order to shew the Heinousness of *profane Cursing and Swearing*.

But before I proceed directly to the Prosecution of this Point, it will be proper to clear this Precept of our Lord from a Misinterpretation that has been put on it by a Set of Men, who heedlessly inter from hence that our Saviour prohibits *Swearing*

CURSING *and* SWEARING. 5

ing before a Magistrate, when required on a solemn and proper Occasion. But that all *Swearing* is not absolutely unlawful for a *Christian*, is evident from the Writings of *St. Paul*, whom we often find upon some solemn Occasions using several Forms of Imprecation and Swearing, as, *I call God to Witness, — God is my Judge, — By your rejoicing in Christ Jesus*, and such like. And that our Saviour does by no Means forbid *Swearing* before a Magistrate in the Words now before us, is plain, if we consider the Scope and Design he had in View, when he gave his Disciples this Command. Permit me to observe to you then, that our Blessed Master had set himself, from the 27th Verse of this Chapter, out of which the Text is taken, to vindicate and clear the Moral Law from the corrupt Glosses and Misconstruction of the *Pharisees*, who then sat in *Moses's* Chair, but without were notoriously faulty in adhering too closely to the literal Expression of the Law, without ever considering the due Extent and spiritual Meaning of it. Accordingly they imagined, that because God had said, *Thou shalt not commit Adultery*, that therefore, supposing a Person was not guilty of the very Act of *Adultery*, he was not chargeable with the Breach of the Seventh Comandment. And likewise in the Matter of *Swearing*, because God had forbidden his People in the Book of *Exodus* and *Deuteronomy*, to take his Name in vain, or to *Swear falsely* by his Name; they therefore judged it lawful to *Swear* by any Creature in Common Discourse, supposing they did not directly mention the Name of God. Our Blessed Saviour therefore, in the
Words

Swearing. This cannot but be a melancholy Prospect for every sincere and honest Minister of *Jesus Christ*, to view his Fellow *Christians* in; and such as will put him on contriving some Means to prevent the spreading at least of so growing an Evil; knowing that the Lord (without Repentance) will assuredly visit for these Things. But alas! what can he do? Publick Animadversions are so neglected amongst us, that where shall we find a common Swearer punished as the Laws direct? And as for private Admonition, Men are now so *hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin*, that to give them sober and pious Advice, and to shew them the Evil of their Doings, is but like *casting Pearls before Swine, they only turn again and rent you*. Since Matters then are come to this Pass, all that we can do is this, that as we are appointed Watchmen and Ambassadors of the Lord, it is our Duty from Time to Time to *shew the People their Transgression, and warn them of their Sin*; so that *whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, we however may deliver our own Souls*. That I therefore may discharge my Duty in this Particular, give me Leave, in the Name of God, humbly to offer to your most serious Consideration some few Observations on the Words of the Text, in order to shew the Heinousness of *profane Cursing and Swearing*.

But before I proceed directly to the Prosecution of this Point, it will be proper to clear this Precept of our Lord from a Misinterpretation that has been put on it by a Set of Men, who heedlessly infer from hence that our Saviour prohibits *Swear-*
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Words

Words now before us, rectifies this their Mistake about *Swearing*, as he had done in the Verses immediately foregoing that concerning *Adultery*, and tells the People, that whatever Allowance the *Pharisees* might give to *Swear* by any Creature, yet he pronounced it absolutely unlawful for any of his Followers to do so. *To have heard*, says he, *that it has been said by them of old Time*, (namely by the *Pharisees* and Teachers of the *Jewish Law*) *Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but perform unto the Lord thine Oaths*; But I say unto you, (I who am appointed by the Father to be the great Prophet and true Law-giver of his Church) *Swear not at all*, in your common Conversation, *neither by Heaven for it is God's Throne*; and therefore to swear by That, it is to swear by Him that sits thereon; *neither by the Earth, for it is his Footstool*; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the City of the Great King; *neither shalt thou swear by thy Head, because thou canst not make one Hair white or black*: But let your Communications (which plainly shews that *Christ* is here speaking of *Swearing*, not before a Magistrate, but in common Conversation) let your Communication, says he, *be Yea, yea; Nay, nay*, a strong Affirmation or Negation at the most; *for whatever is more than this cometh of Evil*; that is, cometh from an evil Principle, from the Evil One, the Devil, the Author of all Evil.

Which by the way, methinks should be a Caution to all such Persons, who, though not guilty of *Swearing* in the gross Sense of the Word, yet attest the Truth of what they are speaking of, though ever so trifling, by saying,
Upon

CURSING and SWEARING. 7

Upon my Life, — As I live, — By my Faith, — By the Heavens, and such like: Which Expressions, however harmless and innocent they may be esteemed by some sorts of People, yet are the very Oaths which our Blessed Lord condemns in the Words immediately following the Text; and Persons who use such unwarrantable Forms of speaking, must expect to be convicted and condemned as *Swearers*, at our Saviour's second Coming to judge the World.

But to return: It appears then from the whole Tenor of our Saviour's Discourse, that in the Words of the Text he does by no Means disannul or forbid *Swearing* before a Magistrate (which, as might be easily shewn, is both lawful and necessary) but only *profane Swearing* in common Conversation; the Heinousness and Sinfulness of which I come now, as was above proposed, more immediately to lay before you.

And here, not to mention that it is a direct Breach of our Blessed Master's and great Lawgiver's Command in the Words of the Text, as likewise of the third Commandment, wherein God positively declares, *he will not hold him Guiltless*, (that is, will assuredly punish him) *that taketh his Name in vain*: Not to mention that it is the greatest Abuse of that noble Faculty of Speech, whereby we are distinguished from the Brute Creation; and the great Hazard the *common Swearer* runs, of being perjured some Time or other: Not to mention these Reasons against it, I say, which of themselves would abundantly prove the Folly and Sinfulness of *Swearing*: — I shall at this Time content myself with inst^{ing}

ing in four Particulars, which highly aggravate the Crime of *profane Swearing*; and those are such as follow,

I. *First*, Because there is no Temptation in Nature to the Sin, nor does the Commission of it afford the Offender the least Pleasure or Satisfaction.

II. *Secondly*, Because it is a Sin which may be so often repeated.

III. *Thirdly*, Because it hardens Infidels against the *Christian Religion*, and must give great Offence, and occasion much Sorrow and Concern to every true Disciple of *Jesus Christ*.

IV. *Fourthly*, Because it is an Extremity of Sin, which can only be matched in Hell.

I. The *First* Reason then, why *Swearing* in common Conversation is so heinous in God's Sight, and why we should not swear at all, is, because it has no Temptation in Nature; nor does the Commission of it, unless a Man be a Devil incarnate, afford the Offender the least Pleasure or Satisfaction.

Now here, I presume, we may lay it down as a Maxim universally agreed on, that the Guilt of any Crime is increased or lessened in Proportion to the Weakness or Strength of the Temptation by which a Person is carried out to the Commission of it. It was this Consideration that ex-
 up^dated and diminished the Guilt of *Saul's* taking him to offer Sacrifice before the Prophet

Samuel

CURSING *and* SWEARING. 9

Samuel came, and of *Uzza's* touching the Ark, because it was in Danger of falling: As, on the contrary, what so highly aggravated the Disobedience of our first Parents and *Lot's* Wife was, because the former had so little Reason to eat the forbidden Fruit, and the latter so small a Temptation to look back on *Sodom*.

And now if this be granted, surely the common *Swearer* must of all Sinners be the most without Excuse, since there is no Manner of Temptation in Nature to the Commission of this Crime. In most of the other Commands, Persons perhaps may plead the Force of Natural Inclination in Excuse for their Breach of them: One, for Instance, may alledge his strong Propensity to Anger, to excuse his breaking of the Sixth: Another, his Proneness to Lust, for his Violation of the Seventh. But now surely the common *Swearer* has nothing of this kind to urge in his Behalf: For though he may have a natural Inclination to this or that Crime, yet no Man, it is to be presumed, can say, he is born of a *swearing* Constitution.

But farther, as there is no Temptation to it, so there is no Pleasure or Profit to be reaped from the Commission of it. Ask the Drunkard why he rises up early to follow strong Drink, and he will tell you, because it affords his sensual Appetite some kind of Pleasure and Gratification, though it be no higher an one than that of a Brute. Enquire of the covetous Worldling, why he defrauds and over-reaches his Neighbour, and he has an Answer ready, — To enrich himself, and to lay up Goods for many Years. But it must certainly

10 *The Heinous Sin of profane*

tainly puzzle the *profane Swearer* himself, to inform you what Pleasure he reaps from *Swearing*: For alas! it is a fruitless, tasteless Thing, that he sells his Soul for. But indeed he does not sell it at all: In this Case he prodigally gives it away (without Repentance) to the Devil; and parts with a blessed Eternity, and runs into everlasting Torment, merely for nothing!

II. But *Secondly*, what increases the Heinousness of *profane Swearing*, is, that it is a Sin which may so often be repeated.

This is another Consideration which always serves to lessen or increase the Guilt and Malignity of any Sin. It was some Excuse for the Drunkenness of *Noah*, and the Adultery of *David*, that they committed these Crimes but once: As, on the contrary, of the Patriarch *Abraham's* Distrust of God, that he repeated the dissembling of *Sarah* to be his Wife two several Times. And if this be admitted as an Aggravation of other Persons Crimes, surely much more so of the Guilt of *common Swearing*, because it is a Sin which may be and is, for the generality, often repeated: In many other gross Sins it cannot be so: If a Man be overcome in Drink, there must be a considerable Time e're he can recover his Debauch, and return to his Cups again: Or if he be accustomed to profane the Sabbath, he cannot do it every Day, but only one in seven. But alas! the *profane Swearer* is ready for another Oath almost before the Sound of the first is out of our Ears: Yea, some double and treble them in one Sentence

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Sentence, even so as to confound the Sense of what they say, by an horrid Din of Blasphemy! Now if the great and terrible *Jehovah* has expressly declared that he *will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his Name but once in vain*: What a vast Heap of these heinous Sins lies at every *common Swearer's Door*! It would be apt to sink him into an intolerable Despair, did he but see the whole Sum of them. And Oh! what a seared Conscience must that Wretch have, that does not feel this prodigious Weight.

III. But *Thirdly*, what makes the Sin of *profane Swearing* appear yet more exceeding sinful, is, that it hardens Infidels against the *Christian Religion*.

It is the Apostle St. *Peter's* Advice to the married Persons of his Time, that they should walk as become the Gospel of *Christ*, that those that were without might be won to embrace the *Christian Religion*, by seeing and observing their pious Conversation coupled together with Fear. And what the Apostle presses on married Persons we find elsewhere enjoined each particular Member of the Church. Accordingly we are commanded by our Blessed Lord to *let our Light so shine before Men, that they may see our good Works, and glorify our Father which is in Heaven*. And the Apostle St. *Paul* bids us *walk circumspectly towards them that are without, redeeming the Time*, that is, embracing all Opportunities to do them good, *because the Days are evil*. But alas! in what a direct

direct Contradiction does the *profane Swearer* live to this and fuch Precepts, who inftead of gaining Profelytes to *Chrift* from the unbelieving Part of the World, does all he can to oppofe it! For how can it be expected that Infidels fhould honour our God, when *Chriftians* themfelves defpife him; or that any fhould embrace our Religion, when the Profeflors of it themfelves make fo light of one of its ftrictest Commands? No, to our Grief and Shame be it fpoken, it is by reafon of fuch Impieties as thefe that our holy Religion (the beft and pureft in itfelf) is become a By-word among the Heathen; that the f acred Authority of the Holy *Jesus* and his Doctrine is defpifed; and *God's Name*, as it is written, *blasphemed among the Gentiles*.

Thefe cannot but be fad Blocks and Offences in the way of our Brethren's Conversion: *But woe be to thofe Men by whom fuch Offences come: We may fay to them, as our blefled Lord did of Judas, It had been better for fuch Men that they had never been born: Or, as he threatens in another Place, It fhall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than for fuch Sinners.*

But this is not all; as *profane Swearing* muft undoubtedly harden thofe in their Infidelity that are without, fo muft it no lefs grieve and give great Offence to thofe honeft and fincere Perfons that are within the Church. We hear of *David's* complaining and crying out, *Woe is me that I am constrained to dwell with Mefech, and to have my Habitation amongst the Tents of Kedar: That is, that he was obliged to live and converse with a People exceedingly wicked and profane.* And

St.

St. Peter tells us, that *Lot's righteous Soul was grieved day by day, whilst he saw and observed the ungodly Conversation of the Wicked*. And no doubt it was one great Part of our blessed Master's Sufferings whilst on Earth, that he was compelled to converse with a wicked and perverse Generation, and to hear his heavenly Father's sacred Name profaned and scoffed at by unrighteous and wicked Men. And surely it cannot but pierce the Heart of every true and sincere *Christian*, of every one that does in any measure partake of the Spirit of his Master to hear the Multitude of Oaths and Curses which proceed daily and hourly out of the Mouths of many People, and those too whose liberal Education and seeming Regard for the Welfare of Religion, one would think, should teach them a more becoming Behaviour. To hear the great and terrible Name of God polluted by Men, which is adored by Angels; and to consider how often that sacred Name is profaned in common Discourse, which we are not worthy to mention in our Prayers: This, I say, cannot but make each of them cry out with holy *David*, *Woe is me that I am constrained to dwell with Mesech, and to have my Habitation amongst the Tents of Kedar*. And though the Blasphemies and profane Discourses of others will not be imputed to sincere Persons for Sin, so long as they have no Fellowship with such hellish Fruits of Darkness, but rather reprove them; nay, rather will be imputed to them for Righteousness, for thus lamenting the Wickedness of *Sion*: yet it will greatly enhance the present Guilt, and sadly increase the future Punishment of every profane Swearer, by whom such Offences

ces come. For if, as our Saviour tells us, *it had been better for a Man to have a Mill-stone tied about his Neck, than that he should offend one of his little ones*, that is, the weakest of his Disciples, *how much severer Punishment will they be thought worthy of*, who not only cause God's Name to be blasphemed among the *Gentiles*, and the Religion of our dear Redeemer to be abhorred; but who make his Saints to weep and mourn, and *vex their righteous Souls from day to day*, by their ungodly, profane, and blasphemous Conversation? Surely as God will put the Tears of *one* into his Bottle, and recompence them with eternal Glory at the great Day of Retribution, so it will be just in him to punish the *other* with eternal Sorrow for all their ungodly and hard Speeches, and cast them into a Lake of Fire and Brimstone where they shall be glad of a Drop of Water to cool those Tongues with which they have so often blasphemed the Lord of Hosts, and grieved the People of our God.

IV. But it is time for me to proceed to give my *Fourth* and last Reason, why *common Swearing* is so exceeding sinful. And that is, because it is such an Extremity of Sin, that can only be matched in Hell, where all are desperate, and without Hope of Mercy.

The damned Devils and damned Souls of Men in Hell may be supposed to rave and blaspheme in their Torments, because they know that the Chains wherein they are held can never be knocked off: But for Men that swim in the Ri-

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ver of God's Goodness, *whose Mercies are renewed to them every Morning*, and who are visited with fresh Tokens of his infinite unmerited Loving-kindness every Moment: For these favourite Creatures to *set their Mouths against Heaven*, and to blaspheme a gracious, patient, all-bountiful God; is a Height of Sin which exceeds the Blackness and Impiety of Devils and Hell itself.

And now, after what has been here offered, to shew the Heinousness of *profane Cursing and Swearing* in common Conversation, may I not very justly address myself to you in the Words of the Text, *Therefore I say unto you, swear not at all*; since it is a Sin that has no Temptation in Nature, nor brings any Pleasure or Profit to the Committer of it; since it hardens Infidels in their Infidelity, and affords sad Causes of Grief and Lamentation to every honest *Christian*; since it is a Sin that generally grows into a Habit; and lastly, such a Sin that can only be matched in Hell.

1. And first then, if these Things be so, and the Sin of *profane Swearing*, as hath been in some Measure shewn, is so exceeding sinful, what shall we say to such unhappy Men, who think it not only allowable, but fashionable, and polite to *take the Name of God in vain*; who imagine that *Swearing* makes them look big amongst their Companions, and really think it a Piece of Honour to abound in it? But alas! little do they think that such a Behaviour argues the greatest Degeneracy of Mind and Fool-hardiness that can possibly be thought of: For what can be more base than one Hour to pretend to adore God in publick Worship, and the very next Moment to blaspheme his Name!

Name! Indeed such a Behaviour from Persons who deny the Being of a God (if any such Fools there be) is not altogether so much to be wondered at: But for Men, who not only subscribe to the Belief of a Deity, but likewise acknowledge him to be a God of infinite Majesty and Power; for such Men, I say, to blaspheme his holy Name by *profane Cursing and Swearing*, and at the same Time confess that this very God has expressly declared he *will not hold him guiltless*, that is, will certainly and eternally punish (without Repentance) him *that taketh his Name in vain*; is such an Instance of Fool-hardiness, as well as Baseness, that can scarcely be paralleled. This is what they presume not to do in other Cases of less Danger: They dare not revile a General at the Head of his Army, nor rouse a sleeping Lion when within reach of his Paw. And is the Almighty God, the great *Jehovah*, the everlasting King, who can consume them by the Breath of his Nostrils, and frown them to Hell in an Instant; is he, I say, the only contemptible Being in their Account that may be provoked without Fear, and offended without Punishment? No, tho' God bear long, he will not bear always: Time will come, and that too perhaps much sooner than such Persons may expect, when God will vindicate his injured Honour, when he will lay bare his Almighty Arm, and make those Wretches feel the eternal Smart of his Justice, whose Power and Name they have so often vilified and blasphemed. Alas! what will become of all their Bravery then? Will they then wantonly sport with the Name of their Maker, and call upon the
King

King of all the Earth to damn them any more in Jest! No, their Note will then be changed: Indeed they shall call, but, alas! it will be for the Rocks to fall on them, and the Hills to cover them from the Wrath of him that sitteth upon the Throne, and from the Lamb for ever. It is true, Time was when they prayed, though without Thought perhaps, for Damnation, both for themselves and others. And now they will find their Prayers answered, — *They delighted in Cursing, therefore shall it happen unto them; they loved not Blessing, there shall it be far from them; they cloathed themselves with Cursing like as with a Garment, and it shall come into their Bowels like Water, and like Oil into their Bones.*

2. But farther, if the Sin of *Swearing* is so exceeding heinous, and withal so common, then it is every particular Person's Duty, especially those that are in Authority, to do their utmost towards discountenancing and suppressing so malignant a Crime. The Duty we owe both to God and our Neighbour requires this at our Hands. By the one we are obliged to assert our Maker's Honour; by the other to prevent our Neighbour's Ruin: Not to mention that it is the greatest Proof we can give of our undissembled Love to our Master, and is but *doing as we would be done by*, and as we ourselves act in Cases of lesser Consequence. Were we to hear either our own or our Friend's good Name vilified and traduced, we think it our bounden Duty to vindicate the wronged Reputation of each: And shall the great, terrible, and holy Name of our best and only Friend, our King, our Father, nay our God; shall this, I
B
say,

say, be daily, nay every Moment, defied and blasphemed, and will no one dare to stand up in Defence of his Honour and Holiness? *Be astonished, O Heavens*, at this! No, let us scorn all such base and treacherous Treatment: Let us, for once at least, resolve to support the Cause of Religion, and with a becoming prudent Courage manifest our Zeal for the Honour of the Lord of Hosts. Men in Authority have double the Advantages of ordinary *Christians*: Their very Office shews they are intended for the Punishment of Evil-doers: And such is the Degeneracy of Mankind, that the generality of them will be more influenced by the Power of Persons in Authority, than by the most laboured Exhortations from the Pulpit. To such therefore, if there are any here present, I humbly address myself, beseeching them in the Name of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, to do their utmost to put a Stop to, and restrain *profane Cursing and Swearing*. And though it must be confessed that this is a Work which requires a great deal of Courage and Pains, yet they would do well to consider it is for God they undertake it, who certainly will support and bear them up in a due Execution of their Office here, and reward them with an exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory, hereafter. But it is Time to draw towards a Conclusion.

4. Let me therefore once more address myself to every Person here present, in the Name of our Lord *Jesus Christ*; and if any amongst them have been any way guilty of this notorious Sin of *Swearing*, let me intreat them by all that is near and dear to them, that they would neither give the Magistrate

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strate the Trouble to punish, nor their Friends any Reason for the future to warn them against committing the Crime; but keep a constant and careful *Watch over the Door of their Lips*, and withal implore the Divine Assistance (without which all is nothing) that *they offend no more* so scandalously *with their Tongues*. Let them seriously lay to Heart what with great Plainness and Simplicity has here been delivered: And if they have any Regard for themselves as Men, or their Reputation as *Christians*; if they would not be a publick Scandal to their Profession, or a Grief to all that know or converse with them: In short, if they would not be Devils incarnate here, and provoke God to punish them eternally hereafter,——I say unto them in the Name of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, *Swear not at all*.

SERMON

SERMON VIII.

THANKFULNESS

FOR

MERCIES *received*

A

Necessary DUTY.

A Discourse delivered to the Ship's
Company on their Arrival in
GEORGIA.

*Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, amongst the Gods?
who is like Thee, glorious in Holiness, fearful in
Praise, doing Wonders! Exod. xv. 11.*

By *GEORGE WHITEFIELD*, A.B.
of *Pembroke-College, Oxford.*

L O N D O N :

Printed for C. DAVIS, at *D'Anvers's-Head*,
in the *Old-Bailey*

M DCC XXXIX.

SERMON VIII.

THANKFULNESS

FOR

THE GIFT OF

A

HEALTHY DUTY.

By the Rev. Mr. [illegible]
of the [illegible] Church, [illegible]
[illegible]

[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]

ALBANY, N.Y.: PUBLISHED BY
[illegible] of Albany, N.Y.

1847
Printed by C. DAVIS, at the [illegible]
[illegible]



SERMON VIII.

Thankfulness for Mercies received
a *necessary* DUTY.

PSALM cvii. 30, 31.

*Then are they glad, because they are at Rest, and
so he bringeth them unto the Haven where they
would be.*

*O that Men would therefore praise the Lord for his
Goodness, and declare the Wonders that he doeth
for the Children of Men!*



UMBERLESS Marks does
Man bear in his Soul, that he is
fallen and estranged from God;
but no one gives a greater Proof
of it, than that Backwardness,
which every one finds within
himself, to the Duty of Praise and

Thanksgiving.

When God placed the first Man in Paradise his
Soul, no doubt, was so filled with a Sense of the
Riches of the Divine Love, that he was continually
employing that *Breath of Life* the Almighty had
not

Thankfulness for Mercies received

not long before *breathed* into him, in blessing and magnifying that all bountiful, all gracious God, in whom he lived, moved, and had his Being.

And the brightest Idea we can form of the Angelical Hierarchy above, and the Spirits of just Men made perfect, is, that they are continually standing round the Throne of God, and cease not Day and Night, saying, *Worthy art thou, O Lamb, that was slain, to receive Power, and Riches, and Wisdom, and Strength, and Honour, and Glory, and Blessing, Rev. v. 11.*

That then, which was Man's Perfection when Time first began, and will be his Employment when Death is swallowed up in Victory, and Time shall be no more, without Controversy, is part of our Perfection, and ought to be our frequent Exercise on Earth: And I doubt not but those blessed Spirits, who are sent forth to minister to them who shall be Heirs of Salvation, often stand astonished when they encamp around us, to find our Hearts so rarely enlarged, and our Mouths so seldom opened, to shew forth the loving Kindness of the Lord, or to speak of all his Praise.

Matter for Praise and Adoration can never be wanting to Creatures redeemed by the Blood of the Son of God; and who have such continual Scenes of his infinite Goodness presented to their View, that were their Souls duly affected with a Sense of his universal Love, they could not but be continually calling on Heaven and Earth, Men and Angels, to join with them in praising and blessing that high and lofty One, who inhabiteth Eternity, who maketh his Sun to shine on the Evil and on the Good, and daily pours down his Blessings on the whole Race of Mankind.

But few are arrived to such a Degree of Charity,
as

as to rejoice with those that do rejoice, and to be as thankful for others Mercies as their own. This Part of *Christian* Perfection, though begun on Earth, will be consummated only in Heaven; where our Hearts will glow with such fervent Love towards God and one another, that every fresh Degree of Glory communicated to our Neighbours, will also communicate to us a fresh Degree of Thankfulness and Joy.

That which has a greater Tendency to excite the Generality of us fallen Men to Praise and Thanksgiving, is a Sense of God's private Mercies and peculiar Benefits bestowed upon ourselves. For as these come nearer our own Hearts, so they must be more affecting; and as they are peculiar Proofs, whereby we may know that God does in a more especial Manner favour us above others, so they cannot but sensibly touch us; and if our Hearts are not quite frozen, like Coals of a Refiner's Fire, must melt us down into Thankfulness and Love. It was a Consideration of the distinguishing Favours God had shewn to his chosen People *Israel*, and the frequent and remarkable Deliverances wrought by him in Behalf of *those who went down to the Sea in Ships, and occupy their Business in great Waters*, that made the holy Psalmist break out so frequently as he does in this Psalm, into this moving, pathetic Exclamation, *Oh that Men would therefore praise the Lord for his Goodness, and declare the Wonders that he doeth for the Children of Men!*

His expressing himself in so passionate, fervent a Manner, implies both the Importance and Neglect of the Duty. As when *Moses* on another Occasion cried out, *Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would practically consider their latter End!* Deut. xxxii. 29.

I say, Importance and Neglect of the Duty ; for out of those many thousands that receive Blessings from the Lord, how few give Thanks in Remembrance of his Holiness? The Account given us of the ungrateful Lepers, is but too lively a Representation of the Ingratitude of Mankind in general ; who, like them, perhaps, when under any humbling Providence, can cry, *Jesus, Master, have Mercy on us*, Luke xvi. 13. but when healed of their Sickness, or deliver'd from their Distress, scarce one in ten can be found returning to give Thanks to God.

And yet as common as this Sin of Ingratitude is, there is nothing we ought more earnestly to pray against. For what is more absolutely condemned in Holy Scripture than Ingratitude? Or what more peremptorily required than the contrary Temper! Thus says the Apostle, *Rejoice evermore, in every Thing give Thanks*, 1 Thes. v. 16—18. *Be careful for nothing: But in every Thing by Prayer and Supplication, with Thanksgiving, let your Requests be made known unto God*, Phil. iv. 6.

On the contrary, the Apostle mentions it as one of the highest Crimes of the Gentiles, that they were not *thankful*. *Neither were they thankful*, says he, Rom. i. 21. As also in another Place, he numbers the *Unthankful*, 2 Tim. iii. 2. amongst those *unholy*, profane Persons who are to have their Portions in the Lake of Fire and Brimstone.

As for our Sins, God puts them behind his Back ; but his Mercies he will have acknowledged. There is *Virtue gone out of me*, says Jesus Christ, Luke viii. 46. And the Woman who was cured of her bloody Issue, must *confess* it: And we generally find, when God sent any remarkable Punishment upon

upon any particular Person, he reminded him of the Favours he had received, as so many Aggravations of his Ingratitude. Thus when God was about to visit Eli's House, he thus expostulates with him by his Prophet, *Did I plainly appear unto the House of thy Fathers, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's House? And did I chuse him out of all the Tribes of Israel, to be my Priest, to offer upon my Altar, to burn Incense, and to wear an Ephod before me? Wherefore kick ye at my Sacrifice, and at mine Offering which I have commanded in my Habitation, and honourest thy Sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the Offerings of Israel my People? Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed, that thy House, and the House of thy Father should walk before me for ever; but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me, for them that honour me will I honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.* 1 Sam. ii. 27, 28, 29, 30.

It was this and such like Instances of God's Severity against the Unthankful, that inclined me to chuse the Words of the Text as the most proper Subject I could discourse on at this Time.

For these four Months, my good Friends we have now been upon the Sea in this Ship, and have occupied our Business in the great Waters. At God Almighty's Word, we have seen the stormy Wind arise, which hath lifted up the Waves thereof. We have been carried up to the Heaven and down again to the Deep, and some of our Souls melted away, because of the Trouble; but I trust we cried earnestly unto the Lord, and he delivered us out of our Distress. For he made the Storm to cease; so that the Waves thereof were still. And now we are glad, because we are at Rest, for God hath brought us to

the Haven where we would be. Oh that you would therefore praise the Lord for his Goodness, and declare the Wonders that he hath done for us, the unworthiest of the Sons of Men.

Thus *Moses*, thus *Joshua* behaved. For when they were about to take their Leaves of the Children of *Israel*, they recounted to them, as the best Arguments and Motives they could urge to engage them to Obedience. And how can I copy after better Examples? What fitter, what more noble Motives to Holiness and Purity of living can I lay before you than they did?

Indeed I cannot say, that we have seen a *Pillar of a Cloud by Day*, or a *Pillar of Fire by Night*, going visibly before us to guide our Course; but this I can say, that the same God who was in that Pillar of a Cloud, and Pillar of Fire, which departed not from the *Israelites*, and who has made the Sun to rule the Day, and the Moon to rule the Night, has by his good Providence directed us in our right Way, or else the Pilot had steered us in vain.

Neither can I say, that we have seen the *Sun stand still*, as the Children of *Israel* did in the Days of *Joshua*. But surely God, during part of our Voyage, has caused it to with-hold some of that Heat, which it usually sends forth in these warmer Climates, or else it had not failed but some of you must have perished in the Sickness that has been, and does yet continue among us.

We have not seen the Waters stand purposely on a Heap, that we might pass through, neither have we been pursued by *Pharaoh* and his Host, and delivered out of their Hands; but we have been led through the Sea as through a Wilderness, and were once remarkably preserved from being

run down by another Ship ; which, had God permitted, the Waters, in all Probability, would immediately have overwhelmed us, and like *Pharaoh* and his Host, we should have sunk as Stones into the Sea.

We may indeed, Atheist like, ascribe all these Things to natural Causes, and say, our own Skill and Foresight has brought us hither in Safety. But as certainly as *Jesus Christ*, that Angel of the Covenant, in the Days of his Flesh walked upon the Water, and said to his sinking *Disciples*, *Be not afraid, it is I*, so surely has the same everlasting *I am, who decketh himself with Light like a Garment, who spreadeth out the Heaven like a Curtain*, who claspeth the Winds in his Fist, who holdeth the Waters in the Hollow of his Hands, and guided the wise Men by a Star in the *East* ; so surely, I say, has he spoken, and at his Command the Winds have blown us where we are now arrived. For his Providence ruleth all Things, *Winds and Storms obey his Word* ; he saith to it at one Time go, and it goeth ; at another, come, and it cometh, and at a third Time blow this Way, and it bloweth.

It is he, my Brethren, and not we ourselves, that has of late sent us such prosperous Gales, and made us ride, as it were, on the Wings of the Wind, into the Haven where we would be.

O that you would therefore praise the Lord for his Goodness, and by your Lives declare that you are truly thankful for the Wonders he hath shewn to us, who are less than the least of the Sons of Men.

I say, declare it by your Lives. For to give him Thanks barely with your Lips, while your Hearts are far from him, is but a mock Sacrifice, nay, an Abomination unto the Lord.

This was the End, the royal Psalmist says, God had in view, when he shewed such Wonders from Time to Time to the People of *Israel* *that they might keep his Statutes and observe his Laws.* Psal. cv. 44. and then, my good Friends, is the End God would have accomplished in us, and the only Return he desires us to make him, for all the Benefits he hath conferred upon us.

O then, let me beseech you, give God your Hearts, your whole Hearts, and suffer yourselves to be drawn by the Cords of infinite Love to honour and obey him.

Assure yourselves you never can serve a better Master; for his Service is perfect Freedom, his Yoke, when worn a little while, exceeding easy, his Burthen light; and in keeping his Commandments there is great Reward, Love, Peace, Joy in the Holy Ghost here, and a Crown of Glory that fadeth not away hereafter.

You may indeed let other Lords have Dominion over you, and Satan may promise to give you all the Kingdoms of the World, and the Glory of them, if you will fall down and worship him; but he is a Liar, and was so from the Beginning; and has not so much to give you, as you may tread on with the Sole of your Foot; or could he give you the whole World, yet that could not make you happy without God. It is God alone, my Brethren, whose we are, in whose Name I now speak, and who has of late shewed us such Mercies in the Deep, that can give solid lasting Happiness to your Souls; and he for this Reason only desires your Hearts, because without him you must be miserable.

Suffer

Suffer me not then to go away without my Errand ; as it is the last Time I shall speak to you, let me not speak in vain ; but let a Sense of the Divine Goodness lead you to Repentance.

Even *Saul*, that abandoned Wretch, when *David* shewed him his Skirt, which he had cut off, when he might have taken his Life, was so melted down with his Kindness, that he lifted up his Voice and wept. And we must have Hearts harder than *Saul's*, nay harder than the nether Millstone, if a Sense of God's late loving Kindnesses, notwithstanding he might so often have destroyed us, does not even compel us to lay down our Arms against him, and become his faithful Servants and Soldiers unto our Lives End.

If they have not this Effect upon us, we shall of all Men be most miserable ; for God is just, as well as merciful ; and the more Blessings we have received here, the greater Damnation, if we do not improve them, shall we incur hereafter.

But God forbid that any of these should ever suffer the Vengeance of eternal Fire, amongst whom I have for these four Months been preaching the Gospel of *Christ*, but yet thus must it be, if you do not improve the Divine Mercies ; and instead of your being my Crown of Rejoicing in the Day of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, I must appear as a swift Witness against you.

But, Brethren, I am persuaded better Things of you, and Things that accompany Salvation, though I thus speak.

Blessed be God, some Marks of a partial Reformation at least, have been visible amongst all you that are Soldiers. And my weak, tho' sincere Endeavours to build you up in the Knowledge and

Fear of God, have not been altogether in vain in the Lord.

Swearing, I hope, is in a great Measure abated with you; and God I trust has blessed his late Visitations by making them the Means of awakening your Consciences, to a more sollicitous Enquiry about the Things which belong to your everlasting Peace.

Fulfil you then my Joy, by continuing thus minded, and labour to go on to Perfection. For I shall have no greater Pleasure than to see, or hear, that you walk in the Truth.

Consider, my good Friends, you are now, as it were entering on a new World, where you will be surrounded with Multitudes of Heathens; and if you take not heed to *have your Conversation honest amongst them, and to walk worthy the Holy Vocation wherewith you are called*, you will act the Hellish Part of *Herod's Soldiers* over again; and curse *Christ's Religion*, as they did his Person, to be had in Derision of those that are round about you.

Consider farther, what peculiar Privileges you have enjoyed above many others that are entering on the same Land. They have had, as it were, a Famine of the Word, but you have rather been in Danger of being surfeited with your Spiritual Manna. And therefore, as more Instructions have been given you, so from you Men will most justly expect the greater Improvement in Goodness.

Indeed I cannot say I have discharged my Duty towards you as I ought. No, I am sensible of many Faults which I have been guilty of in my ministerial Office, and for which I have not failed, nor I hope, ever shall fail to humble myself in secret before God. However, this I can say, that ex-

cept

cept a few Days that have been spent necessarily on other Persons, whom God immediately called me to write and minister unto, and the two last Weeks wherein I have been confined by Sickneſs, all the while I have been aboard, I have been either actually engaged in, or preparing myſelf for inſtructing you. And though you are now to be committed to the Care of another (whoſe Labours I heartily beſeech God to bleſs amongſt you) yet I truſt I ſhall at all Seasons, if need be, willingly ſpend, and be ſpent, for the Good of your Souls, though the more abundantly I love you, the leſs I ſhould be loved.

As for your military Affairs, I have nothing to do with them. Fear God, and you muſt honour the King. Nor am I better acquainted with the Nature of that Land which you are now come over to protect; only this I may venture to affirm in general, that you muſt neceſſarily expect upon your Arrival at a new Colony, to meet with many Difficulties. But your very Profeſſion teaches you to endure Hardſhip; be not therefore faint-hearted, but quit yourſelves like Men, and be ſtrong, *Numb. xiv.* Be not like thoſe cowardly Perſons, who were affrighted at the Report of the falſe Spies, that came and ſaid, that there were People tall as the *Anakims* to be grappled with; but be ye like unto *Caleb* and *Joſhua*, all Heart; and ſay, we will act valiantly, for we ſhall be more than Conquerors over all Difficulties thro' *Jeſus Chriſt* that loved us.---- Above all Things, my Brethren, take heed and beware of murmuring, like the perverſe *Iſraelites*, againſt thoſe that are ſet over you; and learn, *whatſoever State you ſhall be in, therewith to be content*, *Phil. iv. 11.*

As I have spoken to you, I hope your Wives also will suffer the Word of Exhortation.

Your Behaviour on Shipboard, especially the first Part of the Voyage, I chuse to throw a Cloak over; for to use the mildest Terms, it was not such as *becomes the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*. However of late, blessed be God, you have taken more Heed to your Ways, and some of you have walked all the while, as became *Women professing Godliness*. Let those accept my hearty Thanks, and permit me to intreat you all in general, as you are all now married, to remember the solemn Vow you made at your Entrance into the Marriage State; and see that you be *subject to your own Husbands, in every lawful Thing: Beg of God to keep the Door of your Lips, that you offend not with your Tongue; and walk in Love, that your Prayers be not hindered*. You that have Children, let it be your chief Concern to *breed them up in the Nurture and Monition of the Lord*. And live all of you so holy and unblameable, that you may not so much as be suspected to be unchaste; and as some of you have imitated *Mary Magdalene* in her Sin, strive to imitate her also in her Repentance.

As for you that are Sailors, what shall I say? How shall I address myself to you? How shall I do that which I so much long to do — touch your Hearts? Gratitude obliges me to wish thus well to you. For you have often taught me many instructive Lessons, and reminded me to put up many Prayers to God for you, that you might receive your Spiritual Sight.

When I have seen you preparing for a Storm, and raising your Sails to guard against it, how have I wished that you and I were both as careful to avoid that Storm of God's Wrath, which will certainly,

certainly, without Repentance, quickly overtake us? When I have observed you catch at every fair Gale, how have I secretly cried, Oh that we were as careful to know the Things that belong to our Peace, before they are hid from our Eyes! And when I have taken Notice how steadily you eyed your Compass, in order to steer aright, how have I wished, that we as steadily eyed the Word of God, which alone can preserve us from *making Shipwreck of Faith and a good Conscience?* In short, there is scarce any thing you do, which has not been a Lesson of Instruction to me; and therefore it would be ungrateful in me, did I not take this Opportunity of exhorting you in the Name of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, to be as wise in the Things which concern your Soul, as I have observed you to be in the Affairs belonging to your Ship.

I am sensible that the Sea is reckoned but an ill School to learn *Christ* in: And to see a devout Sailor is esteemed as uncommon a Thing, as to see *Saul* amongst the Prophets. But whence this Wondering! Whence this looking upon a godly Sailor as a Man to be wondered at, as a speckled Bird upon the Earth? I am sure for the little Time I have come in and out amongst you, and as far as I can judge from the little Experiment I have had of Things, I scarce know any way of Life, that is capable of greater Improvements than yours.

The continual Danger you are in of being overwhelmed by the great Waters; the many Opportunities you have of beholding God's Wonders in the Deep; the happy Retirement you enjoy from worldly Temptations; and the daily Occasions that are offered you to endure Hardships, are
such

such noble Means of pronouncing the Spiritual Life, that were your Hearts bent towards God, you would account it your Happiness, that his Providence has called you, to *go down to the Sea in Ships, and to occupy your Business in the great Waters.*

The royal Psalmist knew this, and therefore in the Words of the Text, calls more especially on Men of your Employ, to *praise the Lord for his Goodness, and declare the Wonders, he doth for the Children of Men.*

And oh that you would be wise in Time, and hearken to his Voice to Day, *whilst it is called to Day*; for ye yourselves know how little is to be done on a sick Bed: And how God has in an especial Manner of late invited you to Repentance. Two of your Crew he has taken off by Death, and most of you he has mercifully visited with a grievous Sicknes. The Terrors of the Lord have been upon you, and when burnt with a scorching Fever, some of you have cried out, *What shall we do to be saved?* Remember then the Resolutions you made, when you thought God was about to take away your Souls. And see, that according to your Promises, to shew forth your Thankfulness not only with your Lips, but in your Lives. For though God may bear long, he will not forbear always; and if these signal Mercies and Judgments do not lead you to Repentance, assure yourselves there will at last come a fiery Tempest from the Presence of the Lord, and will sweep away you, and all other Adversaries of God.

I am positive neither you nor the Soldiers have wanted, nor will want any Manner of Encouragement

agement to Piety and Holiness of living from those two Persons who have here the Government over you ; for they have been such Helps to me in my Ministry, and have so readily concurred in every thing for your Good, that they may justly demand a publick Acknowledgment of Thanks both from you and me.

Permit me then, my honoured Friends, in the Name of both your People, to return you hearty Thanks for the Care and Tenderneſs you have expreſſed for the Welfare of their better Parts.

As for the private Favours you have ſhewn my Perſon, I hope ſo deep a Senſe of them is imprinted on my Heart, that I ſhall plead them before God in Prayer as long as I live.

But I have ſtill ſtronger Obligations to intercede in your Behalf. For God, for ever adored be his free Grace in *Chriſt Jeſus*, has ſet his Seal to my Ministry in your Hearts. Some diſtant Pangs of the *New Birth* I have obſerved to come upon you ; and God forbid that I ſhould ſin againſt the Lord, by ceaſing to pray, that the good Work begun in your Souls, may be carried on till the Day of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*.

The Time of our Departure from each other is now at Hand, and you are going out into a World of Temptations. But though abſent in Body, let us be preſent with each other in Spirit ; and God, I truſt, will enable you to be ſingularly good, to be ready to be accounted Fools for *Chriſt's* Sake ; and then we ſhall meet never to part again in the Kingdom of our Father which is in Heaven.

To you my Companions and familiar Friends, who came over with me to sojourn in a strange Land, do I in the next Place address myself. For you I especially fear, as well as for myself; because as we take sweet Counsel together oftner than others, and as you are let into a more intimate Friendship with me in private Life, the Eyes of all Men will be upon you to note even the minutest Miscarriage — and therefore it highly concerns you to *walk circumspectly* towards those that are without. I hope nothing but a single Eye to God's Glory and the Salvation of your own Souls, brought you from your native Country. • Remember then the End of your coming hither, and you can never do amiss. — Be Patterns of Industry, as well as Piety, to those who shall be around you; and above all Things let us have such a fervent Charity amongst ourselves, that it may be said of us, as of the Primitive Christians, See how the Christians love one another.

And now I have been speaking to others particularly, I have one general Request to make to all, and that with Reference to myself.

You have heard, my dear Friends, how I have been exhorting every one of you to shew forth your Thankfulness for the Divine Goodness, not only with your Lips, but in your Lives: But *Physician heal thy self*, may justly be retorted on me. For (without any false Pretences to Humility) I find my own Heart so little inclined to this Duty of Thanksgiving for the Benefits I have received, that I had need for sharing *Hezekiah's* Fate, who, because he was lifted up by, and not thankful enough for the great Things God had done for him, was given up a Prey to the

the Pride of his own Heart. I need therefore, and beg your most importunate Petitions at the Throne of Grace, that no such Evil may befall me,——that the more God exalts me, the more I may debase myself,——and that, after I have preached to others, I myself may not be a Cast-away.

And now, Brethren, into God's Hands I commend your Spirits, who, I trust, through his infinite Mercies in *Christ Jesus*, will preserve you blameless, 'till his second Coming to judge the World.

Excuse my detaining you so long, it is the last Time I shall speak to you, perhaps; my Heart is full, and out of the Abundance of it, I could continue my Discourse 'till Midnight.——

But I must away to your new World——may God give you new Hearts, and enable you to put in Practice what you have heard from Time to Time to be your Duty; and I need not wish you any Thing better. For then God will so bless you, that *you will build you Cities to dwell in; then will you sow your Lands, and plant Vineyards, which will yield you Fruits of Increase, Ps. cvii. 36, 37. Then your Oxen shall be strong to labour, there shall be no leading into Captivity, and no Complaining in your Streets; then shall your Sons grow up as the young Plants, and your Daughters be as the polished Corners of the Temple: Then shall your Garners be full and plenteous with all Manner of Store, and your Sheep bring forth Thousands and Ten Thousands in your Streets, Psal. cxliv. In short, then shall the Lord be your God; and as surely as he has now brought us to this Haven, where we would be, so surely,*
after

20 *Thankfulness for Mercies received*

after we have passed through the Storms and Tempests of this troublesome World, will he bring us to the Haven of eternal Rest, where we shall have nothing to do, but to praise him for ever for his Goodness, and declare in never ceasing Songs of Praise, the Wonders he has done for us, and all the other Sons of Men.

*To which blessed Rest, GOD, of his infinite Mercy, bring us all, through Jesus Christ, our Lord; to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, Might, Majesty, and Dominion, now, henceforth, and for ever-more. Amen.
Amen.*

SERMON

SERMON IX.

THE

ETERNITY

OF

HELL-TORMENTS;

OR,

Eternal Damnation, the certain Portion of the Wicked, in the other World.

Asserted, and proved, both from Reason and Revelation.

Luke xvi, 26.—*Between us and you there is a great Gulf fixed; so that they which would pass from hence to you, cannot, neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.*

By GEORGE WHITEFIELD, A.B.
of Pembroke-College, Oxford.

L O N D O N:

Printed for C. DAVIS, at D'Anvers's Head,
in Chancery-Lane.

M DCC XXXIX.

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S E R M O N IX.

The ETERNITY of HELL-TORMENTS.

M A T T H. xxv. 46.

These shall go away into Everlasting Punishment.



THE Excellency of the Gospel Dispensation is evidenced by nothing more, than those Sanctions of Rewards and Punishments, which it offers to the Choice of all its Professors, in order to invite or compel them to be obedient to its Precepts.—For it promises no less than Eternal Happiness to the Good, and denounces no slighter a Punishment than Everlasting Misery against the Wicked. On the one Hand, *it is a Savour of Life unto Life* ; on the other, *a Savour of Death unto Death*. And though one would imagine, the bare Mentioning of the former would be sufficient to draw Men to their Duty, yet Ministers in all Ages have found it necessary,

to remind their People of the latter, and to set before them the Terrors of the Lord, as so many powerful Diffuafives from Sin.

But whence is it that Men are so difingenuous? Why, the Reason seems to be this: The Promise of our Eternal Happiness on our Well-doing, is so agreeable to the Inclinations and Wishes of Mankind, that all that call themselves Christians, universally and willingly subscribe to the Belief of it. But then there is something so shocking in the Consideration of Eternal Torments, and, seemingly, such an infinite Disproportion between endless Duration of Pain, and a short Life spent in Pleasure, that Men (some at least of them) can scarcely be brought to confess it as an Article of their Faith, that an Eternity of Misery awaits the Wicked in a future State.

I shall therefore *at this Time beg Leave*, to insist on the Proof of this Part of one of the Articles of our Creed; and endeavour *to make good* what our Blessed Lord has here threatned in the Words of the Text, that *these*, that is, the *Wicked, shall go away into everlasting Punishment*.

Accordingly, without considering the Words as they stand in Relation to the Context, I shall resolve all I have to say into this general Proposition: ‘ That the Torments reserved for the Wicked hereafter, are eternal.’

But, before I proceed to make good this, I must inform you that I take it for granted,

All here present stedfastly believe, ‘ They have
‘ something within them, which we call a Soul, and
‘ which is capable of surviving the Dissolution of
‘ the Body, and of being miserable or happy to all
‘ Eternity.’

I take

I take it for granted farther, ' That you believe
' a Divine Revelation, that those Books, emphati-
' cally called *the Scriptures*, were written by the
' Inspiration of God, and that the Things therein
' contained, are founded upon Eternal Truth.'

I take it for granted, ' That you believe, that
' the Son of God came down to die for Sinners ;
' that there is but one Mediator between God and
' Man, even the Man *Christ Jesus*.'

These Things being granted, (and they were
necessary to be premised) proceed we now *to make*
good the one general Proposition mentioned before,
and asserted in the Text, that ' The Torments re-
' served for the Wicked hereafter are eternal.'
These, says our Blessed Lord, *shall go away into*
Everlasting Punishment.

The first Argument I shall advance to prove that
the Torments reserved for the Wicked hereafter,
are eternal, (for I have taken it for granted, that
you believe those Books, emphatically called *the*
Scriptures, were written by the Inspiration of God,
and that the Things contained therein are founded
upon eternal Truth) is, That the Word of God
himself assures us, Line upon Line, that it will be so.

To quote all the Texts that might be produced
in Proof of this, would be endless.—Let it suffice
to instance only a few. In the *Old Testament*, in the
Book of *Daniel*, Chap. xii. ver. 2. we are told, that
Some shall awake to Everlasting Life, and others to
Everlasting Contempt. In the Book of *Isaiab*, it is
said, that *The Worm of those that have transgressed*
God's Law, shall not die, nor their Fire be quenched.
And in another Place, the holy Prophet, struck,
no Doubt, with Astonishment and Horror at the
Prospect of the Continuance of the Torments of the

Damned, breaks out into this moving Expostulation, *Who can dwell with everlasting Burnings?*

The *New Testament* is still fuller as to this Point, it being a Revelation which brought this and such like Particulars to a clear Light. The Apostle *Jude* tells us of the profane Despisers of Dignities in his Days; that *for them was reserved the Blackness of Darkness for ever*. And in the Book of the *Revelations* it is written, that *The Smoke of the Torments of the Wicked ascendeth for ever and ever*. And if we believe the Witness of Men inspired, the Witness of the Son of God, who had the Spirit given him, as he was a Mediator without Measure, is still far greater. And he, in *St. Mark's Gospel*, repeats this solemn Declaration three several Times. *It is better for thee to enter into Life maimed*; that is, it is better to forego the Gratification of thy Lust, or incur the Displeasure of a Friend, which may be so dear to thee as a Hand, or as useful as a Foot, *than having two Hands and Feet*, that is, for indulging the one, or disobeying God to oblige the other, *to be cast into Hell, where the Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched*.

And here again, in the Words of the Text, *These*, that is, the Wicked, says he, *shall go away into everlasting Punishment*.

I know it has been objected by some who have denied the Eternity of Hell Torments, 'That the Words *Everlasting* and *Ever and Ever*, are often used in the Holy Scriptures, (especially in the *Old Testament*) when they signify not an endless Duration, but a limited Term of Time.'

And this we readily grant. But then we reply, 'That when the Words are used with this Limitation, they either manifestly appear to be used so
' from

‘ from the Context,’ or are put in Opposition to ‘ some occasional Types, which God gave his People on some special Occasions, as when it is said, *it shall be a perpetual or everlasting Statute, or a Statute for ever*, that is, a standing Type, and not merely transient or occasional, as was the *Pillar of Cloud*, the *Manna*, or such like. Or lastly, they have a Relation to that Covenant God made with his spiritual *Israel*, which, if understood in a spiritual Sense, will be everlasting, though the ceremonial Dispensation be abolished.

Besides, it ought to be observed, that some of the Passages, just now referred to, have neither of these Words so much as mentioned in them, and cannot possibly be interpreted so as to denote only a limited Term of Years.

But let that be as it will, it is evident even to a Demonstration, that the Words of the Text however, will not admit of such a restrained Signification, as appears from their being directly opposed to the Words immediately following, *viz. That the Righteous shall go into Life eternal*. From which Words, all are ready to grant, that the Life promised to the Righteous will be eternal; and why the Punishment threatned to the Wicked should not be understood to be eternal likewise, when the very same Word in the Original, is used to express the Duration of each, no Shadow of a Reason can be given.

But, *Secondly*, There cannot be one Argument urged, why God should reward his Saints with everlasting Happiness, which will not equally prove that he ought to punish Sinners with eternal Misery.

For, since we know nothing (at least for a Certainty) how he will deal with either, but by a divine Revelation; and since, as was proved by the foregoing

going Argument, he hath as positively threatned, eternally to punish the Wicked, as to reward the Good; it follows that his Truth will be as much impeached and called in Question, did he not inflict his Punishments, as it would be, if he did not confer his Rewards.

To this also it has been objected, 'That though God is oblig'd by his Promise to give his Rewards, yet his Veracity could not be called in Question, supposing he should not execute his Threatnings, as he actually did not in the Case of *Nineveh*, which God expressly declared by his Prophet *Jonah*, should be destroyed in forty Days; notwithstanding the Sequel of the Story informs us, that *Nineveh* was spared.'

But in Answer to this Objection we affirm, 'That God's Threatnings, as well as Promises, are without Repentance.' And for this Reason, because they are both founded on the eternal Laws of right Reason. Accordingly we always find, that where the Conditions were not performed, on the Non-performance of which the Threatnings were denounced, God always executed the Punishment threatned. The Driving *Adam* out of *Eden*, the Destruction of the old World by a Deluge of Water, and the Overthrow of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, are, and will be always so many standing Monuments of God's executing his Threatnings when denounced, though, to our weak Apprehensions, the Punishment may seem far to exceed the Crime.

It is true, God did spare *Nineveh*, and that because the Inhabitants did actually repent, and therefore performed the Conditions upon which it was supposed by the Prophet's being sent to warn them, the threatned Punishment should be withheld.

And

And so likewise in Respect to Gospel Threatnings. If Men will so far consult their own Welfare, as to live up to the Gospel Terms, God certainly will not punish them; but on the contrary confer upon them his Rewards: But to affirm that He will not punish, and that eternally too, impenitent, obstinate Sinners, according as he hath threatned, if they do not perform the Terms of the Gospel; what is it, in Effect, but to make God like a Man, that he should lie, or the Son of Man, that he should repent?

But the Absurdity of such an Opinion will appear still more evident from

The next and *Third* Argument, I shall offer to prove, *that the Torments reserved for the Wicked hereafter, are eternal, viz. From the Nature of the Christian Covenant.*

And here I must again observe, that it was taken for granted at the Beginning of this Discourse, that,
 ‘ You believe the Son of God came down to save
 ‘ Sinners; that there is but one Mediator between
 ‘ God and Man, even the Man *Christ Jesus.*’

And here I take it for granted farther, (unless you believe the absurd and unwarrantable Doctrine of Purgatory) that you are fully persuaded, that this Life is the only Time allotted by Almighty God for working out our Salvation, and that after a few Years are passed over, there will remain no more Sacrifice for Sin.

And if this be granted, (and who dares deny it ?) it follows that if a wicked Man dieth in his Wickedness, and under the Wrath of God, he must continue in that State to all Eternity. For, since there is no Possibility of his being delivered out of such a Condition but by and thro’ *Christ*; and since, at the Hour of Death, the Time of *Christ’s* Mediation
 and

and Intercession for him is irrecoverably gone ; the same Reason that may be given, why God should punish a Sinner that dieth under the Guilt of his Sins for a single Day, will equally hold good, why he should continue to punish him for a Year, an Age, nay, to all Eternity.

But I hasten to the *Fourth* and last Argument, to prove, *That the Torments reserved for the Wicked hereafter are eternal, viz. Because the Devil's Punishment is to be so.*

That there is such a Being whom we call the *Devil* ; that he was once an Angel of Light, but for his Pride and Rebellion against God was cast down from Heaven, and is now permitted with the rest of his spiritual Wickednesses, to walk to and fro, seeking whom they may devour. That there is a Place of Torment reserved for them, or, to use the Apostle's Words, *that they are reserved in everlasting Chains under Darkness unto the Judgment of the Great Day*, are Truths all here present were supposed to be convinced of, when it was taken for granted under the second Proposition at the Beginning of this Discourse, that you believed the *Holy Scriptures* to be written by the Inspiration of God, wherein these Truths are delivered.

But then if we allow all this, and think it no Injustice in God to punish those glorious Spirits for their Rebellion, how can we think it unjust in him, to punish wicked Men, for Impenitency, to all Eternity ?

You will say, perhaps, that they have sinned against greater Light, and therefore deserve a greater Punishment. And so we grant that the Punishment of the fallen Angels may be greater as to Degree, than that of wicked Men. But then we affirm, it will be equal as to the eternal Duration of it. For,
in

in that Day, as the lively Oracle of God informs us, shall the Son of Man say to them on his left Hand, *Depart from me ye Cursed into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* Where we find that impenitent Sinners are to be cast into the same *everlasting Fire*, with the Devil and his Angels; and that too very justly. For, though they may have sinned against greater Light, yet Christians sin against greater Mercy. Since *Christ* took not hold of, did not die for the fallen Angels, but for the Seed of *Abraham*, for Men and for our Salvation. So that if God spared not these excellent Beings, assure thyself, O obstinate Sinner, whoever thou art, he will by no Means spare thee.

From what then has been said it plainly appears, that verily *the Torments reserved for the Wicked hereafter are eternal.* And if so, Brethren, how holy ought we to be in all Manner of Conversation and Godliness, that we may be accounted worthy to escape this Wrath to come!

But before I proceed to a practical Exhortation, permit me to draw an Inference or two from what has been said.

And First, *If the Torments reserved for the Wicked hereafter are eternal*, what shall we say to those who make an open Profession in their Creed to believe a Life everlasting, *i. e.* a Life of Happiness as well as Misery, and yet dare to live in the actual Commission of those Sins which will unavoidably, without Repentance, bring them into that Place of Torment? Thou believest the Punishments of the impenitently Wicked in another Life, are eternal: Thou dost well, *The Devils also believe and tremble.* But know, O vain Man, unless this Belief doth influence thy Practice, and makes thee bid Adieu to thy Sins, every
Time

Time thou repeatest thy Creed, thou dost in Effect say, I believe I shall be undone for ever.

But, *Secondly*, if the Torments reserved for the Wicked hereafter are eternal, then let this serve as a Caution to such Persons, (and it is to be feared there are such) who go about to dissuade others from the Belief of such an important Truth. There can be no surer Way, in all Probability, to encourage and promote Infidelity and Prophaneness, than the broaching or maintaining such an unwarrantable Doctrine. For if the positive Threats of God concerning the Eternity of Hell-Torments are already found insufficient to deter Men from Sin, what a higher Pitch of Wickedness may we imagine they will quickly arrive at, when they are taught to entertain any Hopes of a future Recovery out of them, or, what is still worse, that their Souls are hereafter to be annihilated, and become like the Beasts that perish? But, Woe unto such blind Leaders of the Blind; no Wonder if they both fall into the Ditch. And let such Corrupters of God's Word know, that I testify unto every Man that heareth me this Day, that if any one should add unto, or take away from the Words that are written in the Book of God, God shall take his Part out of the Book of Life, and shall add unto him all the Plagues that are in that Book.

Thirdly and Lastly, if the Torments reserved for the Wicked hereafter are eternal, then this may serve as a Reproof for those who quarrel with God, and say it is inconsistent with his Justice, to punish a Person to all Eternity, only for enjoying the Pleasures of Sin for a Season. But such Men must be told, that it is not their thinking or calling God unjust, will make him so, no more than a condemned Prisoner's saying the Law or Judge is unjust, will render

der either duly chargeable with such an Imputation. But knowest thou, O Worm, what Blasphemy thou art guilty of, in charging God with Injustice? Shall the Thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? And wilt thou presume to arraign the Almighty at the Bar of thy shallow Reasoning, and call him unjust, for punishing thee eternally, only because thou wishest it may not be so? But hath God said it; and shall he not do it? He hath said it: And let God be true, tho' every Man be a Liar. *Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?* Assuredly he will. And if Sinners will not own his Justice in his Threatnings here, they will be compelled e're long to own and feel them when tormented by him hereafter.

But to come to a more practical Application of what has been delivered.

You have heard, Brethren, the Eternity of Hell Torments plainly proved, from the express Declarations of Holy Scriptures, and Consequences naturally drawn from them. And now there seems to need no great Art of Rhetorick to persuade any understanding Person to avoid and abhor those Sins, which without Repentance will certainly plunge him into this eternal Gulph. The Disproportion between the Pleasure and the Pain, (if there be any Pleasure in Sin) is so infinitely great, that supposing it was only possible, tho' not certain, that the Wicked would be everlasting punished, no one that has the Reason of a Man, for the enjoying a little momentary Pleasure, would, one would imagine, run the Hazard of enduring eternal Pain. But since the Torments of the Damned are not only possible, but certain, (since God himself, who can not lye, has told us so) for Men, notwithstanding to persist in their Disobedience,

bedience, and then flatter themselves that God will not make good his Threatnings, is a most egregious Instance of Folly and Presumption.

Would we now and then draw off our Thoughts from sensible Objects, and by Faith meditate a While on the Miseries of the Damned, I doubt not but we should, as it were, hear many an unhappy Soul venting his fruitless Sorrows in some such piteous Moans as these.

*O wretched Man that I am, who shall deliver me from this Body of Death! O foolish Mortal that I was, thus to bring myself into these never-ceasing Tor-
tures, for the transitory Enjoyment of a few short-lived Pleasures, which scarcely afforded me any Satisfaction, even when I most indulged myself in them. Alas! are these the Wages, these the Effects of Sin? Are all the Grand Deceiver's inviting Promises come to this? O damned Apostate! First to delude me with pretended Promises of Happiness, and after several Years Drudgery in his Service, thus to involve me in eternal Woe. Oh that I had never hearkened to his beguiling Insinuations! Oh that I had rejected his very first Suggestions with the utmost Detestation and Abhorrrnce! Oh that I had taken up my Cross and followed Christ! Oh that I had never ridiculed serious Godliness; and out of a false Politeness, contemned the truly Pious, as too Severe, Enthusiastick, or superstitious! For, I then had been happy indeed, happy beyond Expression, happy to all Eternity, yonder in those blessed Regions where they sit, cloathed with unspeakable Glory, and chanting forth their Seraphick Hallelujah's to the Lamb that sitteth upon the Throne, for ever. But, alas! these Reflections come now too late: These Wishes now are vain and fruitless. I have not suffered, and therefore must not reign with them.*

them. I have in Effect denied the Lord that bought me, and therefore justly am I now denied by him.

But must I live for ever tormented in these Flames? Must this Body of mine, which not long since lay in State, was cloathed in Purple and fine Linnen, and fared sumptuously every Day, must this be here eternally confined, and made the Mockery of insulting Devils? Oh, Eternity! that Thought fills me with Despair. I cannot, will not, yet I must be miserable for ever.

Come then, all ye self-deluding, self-deluded Sinners, and imagine yourselves for once in the Place of that truly wretched Man I have been here describing. Think, I beseech you by the Mercies of God in Christ Jesus, think with yourselves, how racking, how insupportable the never dying Worm of a self-condemning Conscience will hereafter be for you to dwell with everlasting Burnings.

Come, all ye Christians of a lukewarm *Laodicean* Spirit, ye *Gallio's* in Religion, who care a little, but not enough for the Things of God, O think, think with yourselves how deplorable it will be to lose the Enjoyment of Heaven, and run into endless Torments, merely because you will be content to be almost, and will not strive to be altogether *Christians*. Consider, I beseech you, consider how you will rave, and curse that fatal Stupidity, that made you believe any thing less than a Life of strict Piety, Self-Denial, and Mortification, can keep you from those Torments, the Eternity of which I have been endeavouring to prove.

But I can no more--These Thoughts are too melancholy for me to dwell on, as well as for you to hear; and God knows, as punishing is his strange Work, so denouncing his Threatnings is mine. But

if

if the bare mentioning the Torments of the Damned is so shocking, Good God! terrible must the Enduring of them be!

And now, are not some of you ready to cry out, *These are hard Sayings, who can bear them?*

But let not sincere *Christians* be in the least terrified at what has been delivered. No, for you is reserved a Crown, a Kingdom, an eternal and exceeding Weight of Glory. *Christ* never said the Righteous, the Upright, the Sincere, but these Wicked, merciless, negatively good Professors before described shall go into everlasting Punishment. Take heed therefore, and beware that there be not in any of you a Root of Bitterness springing up of Unbelief. But, on the contrary, steadfastly and heartily rely on the many precious Promises reached out to you in the Gospel, knowing that he who hath promised is faithful, and therefore will perform.

But, let no obstinately wicked Professors dare to apply any of the Divine Promises to themselves. *For it is not meet to take the Children's Bread and give it unto Dogs.* No, to such the Terrors of the Lord only belong. And as certainly as *Christ* will say to his true Followers, *Come, ye blessed Children of my Father, receive the Kingdom prepared for you from the Beginning of the World,* so he will unalterably pronounce this dreadful Sentence against all that die in their Sins, *Depart from me, ye Cursed, into everlasting Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels.*

From which unhappy State may God of his infinite Mercy deliver us all through *Jesus Christ*, to whom with Thee, O Father, and Thee, O Holy Ghost, Three Persons and One Eternal God, be ascribed, as is most due, all Honour, Power, Might, Majesty, and Dominion, now, and for evermore.

F I N I S.

S E R M O N X.

D I R E C T I O N S

How to hear

S E R M O N S;

O R,

Preaching a Divine Ordinance, 'instituted by G O D for the Instruction of C H R I S T I A N S in the Mysteries of R E L I G I O N.

Mat. v. 2, 2. And seeing the Multitudes, he went up into a Mountain, and when he was set his Disciples came unto him, and he opened his Mouth, and taught them.

By GEORGE WHITEFIELD, A.B
of Pembroke-College, Oxford.

L O N D O N:

Printed for C. DAVIS, at D'Anvers's-Head,
in the Old-Bailey

M DCC XXXIX.

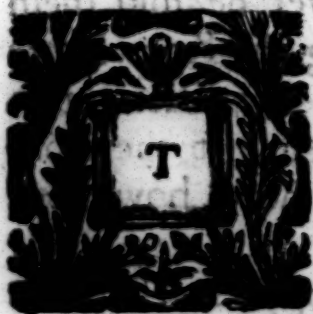


S E R M O N X.

DIRECTIONS how to hear S E R M O N S.

LUKE viii. 18.

Take heed therefore how you hear.



THE Occasion of our Lord's giving this Caution was this: Perceiving that much People were gathered together, to hear him out of every City, and knowing (for he is God, and knoweth all Things) that many, if not most of them, would be Hearers only, and not Doers of the Word, he spake to them by a Parable, wherein, under the Similitude of a Sower, that went out to sow his Seed, he plainly intimated how few there were amongst them who would receive any saving Benefit from his Doctrine, or bring forth Fruit unto Perfection.

The Application, one would imagine, should be plain and obvious: But the Disciples, as yet

unenlightened in any great Degree by the Holy Spirit, and therefore unable to see into the hidden Myſteries of the Kingdom of God, dealt with our Saviour, as People ought to deal with their Miniſters — diſcourſed with him privately about the Meaning of what he had taught them in Publick, and with a ſincere Deſire of doing their Duty, asked for an Interpretation of the Parable.

Our bleſſed Lord, as he always was willing to inſtruct thoſe that were teachable, (herein ſetting his Miniſters an Example to be courteous and eaſy of Acceſs,) freely told them the Signification of it. And withal, to make them more cautious and more attentive to his Doctrine for the future, he tells them, that they were in an eſpecial Manner to be the Light of the World, and were to proclaim on the Houſe-Top whatſoever he told them in Secret. And as their improving the Knowledge already imparted, was the only Condition upon which more was to be given them, it therefore highly concerned them to take heed how they heard.

From the Context then it appears, that the Words were primarily ſpoken to the Apoſtles themſelves. But becauſe they were the Repreſentatives of the whole Church, and 'tis to be feared out of thoſe many Thouſands that flock to hear Sermons, but few comparatively ſpeaking are effectually influenced by them; I cannot but think it very neceſſary to remind you of the Caution given by our Lord to his Diſciples, and to exhort you with the utmoſt Earneſtneſs to *take heed how you hear*.

In Prosecution of which Design I shall in the following Discourse,

- I. *First*, Prove that every one ought to take all Opportunities of hearing Sermons. And
- II. *Secondly*, I shall lay down some Cautions and Directions, in order to your hearing them with Profit and Advantage.
- I. And, *First*, I am to prove that every one ought to take Opportunities of hearing Sermons.

That there have always been particular Reasons set apart by God to instruct and exhort his People to practice what he should require of them, is evident from many Passages of Scripture. — St. *Jude* tells us, that *Enoch* the seventh from *Adam* prophesied, or preached, concerning the Lord's coming with ten thousand of his Saints to Judgment. And *Noah*, who lived not long after, is stiled by St. *Peter*, a *Preacher of Righteousness*. And though in all the intermediate Space between the Flood and giving of the Law, we hear but of few Preachers, yet we may reasonably conclude, that God never left himself without Witness, but at sundry Times, and after divers Manners spoke to our Fathers by the Patriarchs and Prophets.

But however it was before, we are assured that after the Delivery of the Law, God has constantly separated to Himself a certain Order of Men to preach to, as well as pray for, his People; and commanded them to enquire their Duty at the Priests Mouths. And though the *Jews* were frequently led into Captivity, and for their Sins scattered abroad through the Face of the Earth, yet he

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he never utterly forlook his Church, but still kept up a Remnant of Prophets and Preachers, as *Ezekiel*, *Jeremiah*, *Daniel*, and others, to reprove, instruct, and call them to Repentance.

Thus was it under the Law. Nor has the Church been worse, but infinitely better provided for under the Gospel: For when *Jesus Christ*, that great High Priest, had through the Eternal Spirit offered himself as a full, perfect, sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation and Satisfaction for the Sins of the whole World, and after his Resurrection had all Power committed to him both in Heaven and Earth, he gave Commission to his Apostles, and in them to all succeeding Ministers, to go and preach the Gospel to every Creature; promising to be with them, to guide, assist, strengthen and comfort them "always, even to the End of the World."

But if it be the Duty of Ministers to preach (and Woe be to them if they do not preach the Gospel, for a Necessity is laid upon them) no doubt, the People are obliged to attend to them; for otherwise, wherefore are Ministers sent?

And how can we here avoid admiring the Love and tender Care which our dear Redeemer has expressed for his Spouse the Church? Who, because he could not be always with us in Person, on account it was expedient he should go away, and as our Fore-runner take Possession of that Glory he had purchased by his precious Blood, yet would not leave us comfortless, but first settled, a sufficient Number of Pastors and Teachers; and afterwards, according to his Promise, actually did and will continue to send down the Holy Ghost to furnish them and their Successors with proper Gifts and

and Graces for the Works of the Ministry, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the edifying of his Body in Love, till we all come in the Unity of the Spirit, to the Fulness of the Measure of the Stature of *Christ*.

Oh! how insensible are those of this unspeakable Gift, who do despite to the Spirit of Grace, who crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open Shame, by wilfully refusing to attend on so great a Means of their Salvation? How aggravating, that Light should come into the World, that the glad Tidings of Salvation should be so very frequently in this populous City, and that so many should loath this spiritual Manna, this Angels Food, and call it light Bread? How much more tolerable will it be for *Tyre* and *Sidon*, for *Sodom* and *Gomorrab*, than for such Sinners? For better Men had never heard of a Saviour's being born, than after they have heard, not to give heed to the Ministry of those, who are employed as his Ambassadors, to transact Affairs between God and their Souls.

We may, though at a Distance, without a Spirit of Prophecy, foretell the eplorable Condition of such Men; and behold them cast into Hell, lifting up their Eyes, being in Torment, and crying out, How often would our Ministers have gathered us, as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings! — But we would not. — Oh that we had known in that our Day, the Things that belonged to our everlasting Peace! — But now they are for ever hid from our Eyes.

Thus wretched, thus inconceivably miserable, will such be as slight and make a Mock at the publick preaching of the Gospel — But taking

it for granted, there are but few, if any, of this unhappy Stamp, who think it worth their while to tread the Courts of the Lord's House, I pass on now to the

II. *Second* general Thing proposed — To lay down some Cautions and Directions, in order to your hearing Sermons with Profit and Advantage.

And here, if we reflect on what has been already delivered, and consider that Preaching is an Ordinance of God, a Means appointed by *Jesus Christ* himself for promoting his Kingdom amongst Men, you cannot reasonably be offended, if, in order that you may hear Sermons with Profit and Advantage, I

First, direct or intreat you to come to hear them, not out of Curiosity, but from a sincere Desire to know and do your Duty.

Formality and Hypocrisy in any religious Exercise is an Abomination unto the Lord. And to enter his House merely to have our Ears entertained, and not our Hearts reformed, must certainly be highly displeasing to the Most High God, as well as unprofitable to ourselves.

Hence it is, that so many remain Unconverted, yea, Unaffected with the most Evangelical Preaching; so that like *St. Paul's* Companions, they only hear the Preacher's Voice with their outward Ears, but do not experience the Power of it inwardly in their Hearts. Or like the Ground near *Gideon's* Fleece, they remain untouched; whilst others that came to be fed with the sincere Milk of the Word, like the Fleece itself, are watered
by

by the Dew of God's Heavenly Blessing, and grow thereby.

Flee therefore, my Brethren, flee Curiosity; and prepare your Hearts by an humble Disposition to receive with Meekness the engrafted Word, and then it will be a Means, under God, to quicken, build up, purify, and save your Souls.

A *Second* Direction I shall lay down for the same Purpose, is, not only to prepare your Hearts before you hear, but also to give diligent heed to the Things that are spoken, whilst you are hearing the Word of God.

If an earthly King was to issue out a Royal Proclamation, on performing or not performing the Conditions wherein contained the Life or Death of his Subjects, entirely depended, how solicitous would they be to hear what those Conditions were? And shall we not pay the same Respect to the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, and lend an attentive Ear to his Ambassadors, when they are declaring in his Name on what Terms our Pardon, Peace, and Happiness may be secured?

When God descended on Mount *Sinai* in terrible Majesty, to give unto his People the Law, how attentive were they to his Servant *Moses*? And if they were so earnest to hear the Thundrings or Threatnings of the Law, shall not we be as solicitous to hear from the Ministers of *Christ*, the glad Tidings of the Gospel?

Whilst *Christ* was himself on Earth, it is said, that the People hang upon him to hear the gracious Words that proceeded out of his Mouth. And if we looked on Ministers as we ought, as the Repre-

Representatives of *Jesus Christ*, we should hang upon them to hear their Words also.

Besides, the sacred Truths that Gospel Ministers deliver are not dry insipid Lectures on Moral Philosophy, intended only to amuse us for a while; but the great Mysteries of Godliness, which therefore we are bound studiously to listen to, lest through our Negligence we should either not understand them, or by any other Means let them slip.

But how regardless are those of this Direction, who instead of hanging on the Preacher to hear him, doze or sleep whilst he is speaking to them from God? Unhappy Men! Can they not watch with our blessed Lord one Hour? What! have they never read how *Eutichus* fell down as he was sleeping, when *St. Paul* continued his Discourse till Midnight, and was taken up dead?

But to return. Though you may prepare your Hearts, as you may think, by a teachable Disposition, and be attentive whilst Discourses are delivering, yet this will profit you little, unless you observe a

Third Direction ----- not to entertain any the least Prejudice against the Minister.

For could a Preacher speak with the Tongue of Men and Angels, if his Audience was prejudiced against him, he would be but as a sounding Brass, or a tinkling Cymbal.

That was the Reason why *Jesus Christ* himself, the eternal Word, could not do many mighty Works, nor preach to any great Effect among those of his own Country; for they were offended at him. And was this same *Jesus*, this God Incarnate

nate again to bow the Heavens, and to come down speaking as never Man spake; yet if we were prejudiced against him, as the *Jews* were, we should harden our Hearts as the *Jews* did theirs.

Take heed therefore, my Brethren, and beware of entertaining any Dislike against those whom the Holy Ghost has made Overseers over you. Consider that the Clergy are Men of like Passions with yourselves. And though we should even hear a Person teaching others to do, what he has not taught himself; yet that is no sufficient Reason for rejecting his Doctrine. For Ministers speak not in their own, but *Christ's* Name. And we know who commanded the People to do whatsoever the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* should say unto them, though they said but did not.

But, *Fourthly*, as you ought not to be prejudiced against, so you should be careful not to depend too much on a Preacher, or think more highly of him than you ought to think. For though this be an Extreme that People seldom run into; yet preferring one Teacher, in Opposition to another, has often been of ill Consequence to the Church of God.

That, we read, was a Fault which the great Apostle of the *Gentiles* condemned in the *Corinthians*: For whereas one said, I am of *Paul*; another, I am of *Apollos*: Are ye not Carnal, says he? For who is *Paul*, and who is *Apollos*, but Instruments in God's Hands, by whom you believed? And are not all Ministers sent forth to be ministring Ambassadors, to those who shall be Heirs of Salvation? And are they not all therefore greatly to be esteemed for their Work's Sake?

The

The Apostle, it is true, commands us to pay double Honour to those who labour in the Word and Doctrine. But then to prefer one Minister at the Expence of another (perhaps to such a Degree, as when you have actually entered a Church, to come out again, because he does not preach) is earthly, sensual, devilish.

Not to mention that Popularity and Applause cannot but be exceeding dangerous even to a rightly informed Mind, and must necessarily fill any thinking Man with a holy Jealousy, lest he should take that Honour to himself, which is due only to God; who alone qualifies himself for his Ministerial Labours, and from whom alone every good and perfect Gift cometh.

A *Fifth* Direction I would recommend is, to make a particular Application of every Thing that is delivered to your own Hearts.

When our Saviour was discoursing at his last hour with his beloved Disciples, and foretold that one of them should betray him, each of them immediately applied it to his own Heart, and said, *Lord, It is I?* And would Persons in like Manner, when Preachers are dissuading from any Vice, or-persuading to any Virtue, instead of crying, this was designed against such and such a one, turn their Thoughts inwardly, and say, *Lord, Is it I?* How far more beneficial should we find Discourses to be, than they generally are now?

But we are apt to wander too much abroad: Always looking at the Mote which is in our Neighbour's Eye, rather than the Beam which is in our own.

Haste

Haste we now to the *Sixth* and last Direction: If you would receive a Blessing from the Lord, when you hear his Word preached, pray to him, both before, in, and after every Sermon, to endue the Minister with Power to speak, and to grant you a Will and Ability to put in Practice what he shall shew from the Book of God to be your Duty.

This would be an excellent Means to render the Word preached effectual to the Enlightening and Enflaming your Hearts, and without this all the other Means before prescribed will be in vain.

No doubt it was this Consideration that made St. Paul so earnestly intreat his Beloved *Ephesians* to intercede with God for him ----- *Praying always*, says he, *with all Manner of Prayer and Supplication in the Spirit, and for me also that I may open my Mouth with Boldness, to make known the Mysteries of the Gospel.* And if so great an Apostle as St. Paul needed the Prayers of his People, much more do these Ministers, who have only the ordinary Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Besides, this would be good Proof that you sincerely desired to do as well as know the Will of God: And it must highly profit both Ministers and People; because God through your Prayers will give them a double Portion of his Holy Spirit, whereby they will be enabled to instruct you more fully in the Things which pertain to the Kingdom of God.

And oh! that all that hear me this Day would seriously apply their Hearts, to practise what has now been told them! ---- How would Ministers see Satan

Satan like Lightning fall from Heaven, and People find the Word preached sharper than a two-edged Sword, and mighty through God to the pulling down of the Devil's strong Holds!

The Holy Ghost would then fall on all them that heard the Word; as when St. *Peter* preached. The Gospel of *Christ* would have free Course, run very swiftly, and Thousands again be converted by a Sermon.

For *Jesus Christ* is the same Yesterday, to Day, and for ever. He has promised to be with his Ministers always, even unto the End of the World. And the Reason why we do not receive larger Effusions of the blessed Spirit of God, is not because our All-powerful Redeemer's Hand is shortned, but because we are not prepared to receive them, but because we do not expect them, but confine them to the Primitive Times.

It does indeed sometimes happen that God to magnify his Free Grace in *Christ Jesus*, is found of them that sought him not; a notorious Sinner is forcibly worked upon by a publick Sermon, and plucked as a Fire-brand out of the Fire. But this is not God's ordinary Way of acting. No, for the Generality, he only visits those with the Power of his Word, who humbly wait to know what he would have them to do. And sends unqualified Hearers not only empty, but hardened away.

Take heed, therefore, ye careless, curious Professors, if any such be here present, how you hear. Remember that, whether we think of it or not, we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of *Christ*, where Ministers must give a strict Account of the Doctrine they have delivered, and you as strict

strict a one, how you have improved under it. And, good God! how will you be able to stand at the Bar of an angry, Sin-avenging Judge, and see so many Discourses you have despised, so many Ministers who once longed and laboured for the Salvation of your precious and immortal Souls, brought out as so many swift Witnesses against you? Will it be sufficient then, think you, to alledge that you went to hear them only out of Curiosity, to pass away an idle Hour, to admire the Oratory, or ridicule the Simplicity of the Preacher? No, God will then let you know, that you ought to have come out of better Principles, that every Sermon has been put down to your Account, and that you must then be justly punished for not improving by them.

But fear not, you little Flock, who with Meekness receive the ingrafted Word, and bring forth the peaceable Fruits of Righteousness; for it shall not be so with you. No; you will be your Minister's Joy, and their Crown of Rejoycing in the Day of our Lord *Jesus*. And they will present you in a holy Triumph faultless and unblameable to our common Redeemer, saying, Behold us, O Lord, and the Children which thou hast given us.

But still *take you heed how you hear*. For upon your improving the Grace you have, more shall be given, and you shall have abundance. For he is faithful that has promised, who also will do it. Nay, Nay, God from out of Sin shall so bless you, that every Sermon you hear shall communicate to you a fresh Supply of Spiritual Knowledge. The Word of God shall dwell in you richly; you shall go on from Strength to Strength, from one Degree
of

of Grace unto another, till being grown up to be perfect Men in *Christ Jesus*, and filled with all the Fulness of God, you shall be translated by Death to see Him as He is, and to sing Praise before his Throne with Angels and Archangels, Cherubims and Seraphims, and the general Assembly of the First-born, whose Names are written in Heaven, for ever and ever.

Which God, &c.

SERMON

SERMON XI.

WORLDLY BUSINESS no Plea for the Neglect of *Religion :*

O R,

Too eager a Pursuit of Temporal
Concerns, inconsistent with sincere
Piety.

Matth. xvi. 26. *For what is a Man profited, if
he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own
Soul? Or what shall a Man give in Exchange
for his Soul?*

By GEORGE WHITEFIELD, A.B.
of Pembroke-College, Oxford.

L O N D O N:

Printed for C. DAVIS, at D'Anvers's Head,
in Chancery-Lane.

M DCC XXXIX.

SERMON XI

WOMEN'S BUSINESS

to be for the neglect of

Religion:

OR,

The order a Pattern of Temporal

Business is compared with those

of the Kingdom of Heaven

and the Kingdom of Hell

by the same Author

By George Burdett, D.D.

London, Printed by J. Knapton, 1734.

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S E R M O N XI.

Worldly Business no Plea for the
Neglect of RELIGION.

MATTH. viii. 22.

Let the Dead bury their Dead.



T. P A U L, preaching at *Athens*, tells them, that, as he passed by, and beheld their Devotions, he perceived they were *in all Things too superstitious*. But, was this Apostle to rise, and come publishing the glad Tidings of Salvation in any of our populous Cities, he would see no Reason why he should charge the Inhabitants with this ; but rather, as he passed by and observed the Tenor of their Life, say, I perceive in all Things ye are too worldly minded ; ye are too eagerly bent on pursuing your lawful Business ; so eagerly, as either wholly to neglect,

lect, or at least too heedlessly to attend on *the one Thing needful*.

There cannot then be a greater Charity shewn to the Christian World, than to sound an Alarm in their Ears, and to warn them of the inexpressible Danger of continually grasping after the Things of this Life, without being equally, nay a thousand times more concerned for their Well-being in a future State.

And there is still the more Occasion for such an Alarm, because Worldly-mindedness so easily and craftily besets the Hearts of Men. For, out of a specious Pretence of serving God in labouring for the Meat which perished, they are insensibly lulled into such a spiritual Slumber, as scarce to perceive their Neglect to secure that which endureth to everlasting Life.

The Words of the Text, if not at first View, yet when examined and explained, will be found applicable to this Case, as containing an admirable Caution not to pursue the Affairs of this World at the Expence of our Happiness in the next.

They are the Words of *Jesus Christ* himself: The Occasion of their being spoken was this,—— As he was conversing with those that were gathered round about him, he gave one of them an immediate Summons to follow him: But he, either afraid to go after such a persecuted Master, or rather loving this present World, says, *Suffer me first to go home and bury my Father*, or, as most explain it, *Let me first go and dispatch some important Business I have now in Hand*. But *Jesus* said

said unto him, *Let the Dead bury their Dead*; Leave worldly Business to worldly Men; let thy secular Business be left undone, rather than thou shouldest neglect to follow me.

Whether this Person did as he was commanded, I know not; but this I know, that what *Christ* said here in Person, he has often whispered with the small still Voice of his *Holy Spirit*, and said to many here present, that rise up early and late, take no Rest and eat the Bread of Carefulness; Come, draw off your Affections from the Things of this Life; take up your Cross and follow me. But, they, willing to justify themselves, make Answer, *Lord suffer us first to bury our Fathers*, to dispatch our secular Affairs.— I say unto all such, *Let the Dead bury their Dead*; let your worldly Business be left undone rather, than you should neglect to follow him.

From the Words thus explained naturally arises this Proposition, — — — — — That no Business, though never so important, can justify a Neglect of true Religion:

The Truth of which I shall first shew,
And then make an Application of it.

I. *First* then, I am to prove that no temporal Business, though never so important, can justify a Neglect of *true Religion*.

By the Word *Religion* I do not mean any Set of moral Virtues, any partial Amendment of our selves, or formal Attendance on any out-

lect, or at least too heedlessly to attend on *the one Thing needful*.

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I. *First* then, I am to prove that no temporal Business, though never so important, can justify a Neglect of *true Religion*.

By the Word *Religion* I do not mean any Set of moral Virtues, any partial Amendment of our selves, or formal Attendance on any out-

ward Duties whatsoever ; but a thorough real Change of Nature wrought in us by the invifible, yet powerful Operation of the *Holy Ghoft*, preserved and nourifhed in our Souls by a constant Ufe of all the Means of Grace, evidenced by a good Life, and bringing forth the Fruits of the Spirit.

This is the true and undefiled Religion, and for the perfecting this good Work in our Hearts, the eternal Son of God came down and fhed his precious Blood ; for this End were we made, and fent into the World, and by this alone can we become the Sons of God. Were we indeed to judge by the common Practice of the World; we might think we were fent into it for no other Purpose than to care and toil for the uncertain Riches of this Life : But if we confult the lively Oracles, they will inform us, that we were born for nobler Ends ; to be born again from above, to be reftored to the Divine Likeneſs by *Jeſus Chriſt* our fecond *Adam*, and thereby be made meet to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven ; and confequently there is an Obligation laid upon all, even the moſt buſy People, to ſecure this End ; it being an undeniable Truth, that all Creatures ought to answer the End for which they were created.

Some, indeed, are for confining Religion to the Clergy, and think it only belongs to thoſe who ſerve at the Altar : But what a fatal Miſtake is this, ſeeing all Perſons are indifferently called by God to the ſame State of inward Holineſs ? As we are all corrupt in our Nature, ſo muſt we

an

all be renewed and sanctified. And though it must be granted, that the Clergy lie under double Obligations to be Examples to Believers in Faith, Zeal, Charity, and whatever else is commendable and of good Report, as being more immediately dedicated to the Service of God; yet as we have been all baptized with one Baptism into the Death of Christ, we are all under a Necessity of performing our Baptismal Covenant, and perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God: For the Holy Scriptures point out to us but one Way of Admission in the Kingdom of Christ,——through the narrow Gate of a sound Conversion: And he that does not enter into the Sheepfold, whether Clergy or Layman, by this Door, will find to his everlasting Confusion, there is no climbing up another Way.

Besides, what a gross Ignorance of the Nature of *true Religion*, as well as our own Happiness, does such a Distinction discover? For, what does our Saviour, by willing us to be religious, require of us, but to subdue our corrupt Passions, to root out ill Habits, to engraft the Heavenly Graces of God's most *Holy Spirit* in their Room; and, in one Word, to fill us with all the Fulness of God?

And will Men be so much their own Enemies, as to affirm this belongs only to those who minister in holy Things: Does it not equally concern the most active Man living? It is the End of Religion to make Men happy, and is it not every one's Privilege to be as happy, as he can? Do Persons in Business find the Corruptions of their Nature, and
Disorder

Disorder of their Passions so pleasing, that they care not whether they ever regulate or root them out? Or will they consent that Ministers shall be alone Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light?——If not, as they desire the same End, why will they not make Use of the same Means? Do they think that God will create a new Thing upon the Earth, and contrary to the Purity of his Nature, and Immutability of his Counsel, admit them into Heaven in their natural State, because they have been encumbered about many worldly Things? Search the Scriptures, and see if they give any Room for such a groundless Hope.

But farther, one would imagine there was something of the highest Concern and utmost Importance in our temporal Affairs, that they should divert so many from purifying their Hearts by Faith, which is in *Christ Jesus*.

A covetous Miser, who neglects Religion by being continually intent on seeking great Things for himself and those for his own Household, flatters himself he herein acts most wisely, and at the same Time will censure and condemn a young Prodigal, who has no Time to be devout, because he is so perpetually engaged in wasting his Substance by riotous Living, and following of Harlots. But yet a little While, and Men will be convinced, that they are as much without Excuse who lose their Souls by hunting after Riches, as those who lose them by hunting after sensual Pleasures. For, though Business may assume an Air of Importance, when compared with other trifling

trifling Amusements, yet when put in the Balance with the Loss of our precious and immortal Souls; it is equally frivolous, — According to that of our Saviour, *What shall it profit a Man, if he shall gain the whole World and lose his own Soul; or what shall a Man give in Exchange for his Soul?*

And now, what need we any farther Proof? We have heard the Decision out of Christ's own Mouth. But because it is difficult to convince them of this important Truth, whose Hearts are blinded by the Deceitfulness of Riches, so that we had need to cry out to them in the Language of the Prophet, *O Earth, Earth, Earth, hear the Word of the Lord.* I shall lay before you one Passage of Scripture more, which I could wish were written on the Tables of all our Hearts. In the xivth of St. Luke, the 18th and following Verses, our Lord puts forth this Parable, — *A certain Man made a great Supper, and bad many, and sent his Servants at Supper Time to call them that were bidden: But they all, with one Consent, began to make Excuse. The One said, I have bought a Piece of Ground, and I must needs go see it, I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought a Yoke of Oxen, and I must needs go and prove them, I pray thee therefore, have me excused. So the Servant returned, and shewed his Master all these Things. — And what follows? Did the Master accept of their Excuses? No; the Text tells us, the good Man was angry, and said, that *none of those which were bidden, should taste of his Supper.* And what does this Parable teach more or less, than that the most
lawful*

lawful Callings cannot justify our Neglect, nay, that they are no longer lawful when they in any wise interfere with the great Concerns of Religion? For, the Marriage-Supper here spoken of, means the Gospel; the Master of the House is *Christ*; the Servants sent out, are his Ministers, whose Duty it is from Time to Time to call the People to this Marriage-Feast; or, in other Words, to be religious. Now, we find those that were bidden, were very well and honestly employed. There was no Harm in buying, or seeing a Piece of Ground, or in going to prove a Yoke of Oxen; but here lay their Fault,—They were doing these Things when they were invited to come to the Marriage Feast.

Without Doubt, Persons may very honestly and commendably be employed in following their respective Callings; but yet, if they are engaged so deeply in these, as to hinder their working out their Salvation with Fear and Trembling, they must expect the same Sentence with their Predecessors in the Parable, that none of them shall taste of *Christ's* Supper; for our particular Calling, as of this or that Profession, must never interfere with our general and precious Calling as we are Christians. Not that Christianity calls us intirely out of the World; the Holy Scriptures warrant no such Doctrine.

It is very remarkable, that in the *Book of Life*, we find some almost of all Kinds of Occupations, who notwithstanding served God in their respective Generations, and shone as so many Lights in the World. Thus we hear of a good *Centurion* in the
Evangelists,

Evangelists, and a devout *Cornelius* in the *Acts*; a pious Lawyer, and some that walked with God, even of *Nero's* Household in the *Epistles*; and our Divine Master himself in his Check to *Martha* does not condemn her for minding, but for being cumbered or perplexed about many Things.

No, you may, nay, you must labour, out of Obedience to God, even for the Meat which perishes. But then, that I may in the *second* Place apply what has been said,

I beseech you, by the Mercies of God, in *Christ Jesus*, let it not be at the Expence of that which endureth to everlasting Life: For, to repeat our Blessed Saviour's Words, *What shall it profit a Man, if he shall gain the whole World and lose his own Soul; or, What shall a Man give in Exchange for his Soul?*

Were we always to live in the World, then worldly Wisdom would be our highest Wisdom: But forasmuch as we have here no continuing City, and were only sent into this World to have our Natures changed, and to fit our selves for that which is to come; then to neglect this important Work for a little worldly Gain, what is it but with prophane *Esaú*, to sell our Birthright for a Mess of Pottage.

Alas! how unlike are Christians to Christianity, they are commanded to seek first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, and all other real Necessaries shall be added unto them; but they are fearful (*O Men of little Faith!*) if they should do so, all other Necessaries would be taken away from

from them : They are strictly forbidden to be careful for the Morrow, and yet they rest not Night or Day, but are continually heaping up Riches for many Years, though they know not who shall gather them.

Is this acting like Persons that are Stangers and Pilgrims upon Earth? Is this keeping their Baptismal Vow? Or rather, is it not directly apostatizing from it, and deserting the Service of *Christ Jesus*?

But what will be the Hope of such Worldlings, when God shall take away their Souls? What, if the Almighty should say to each of them, as he did to the rich Fool in the Gospel, *This Night shall thy Soul be required of thee*; Oh then, what would all those Things profit them, which they are now so busy in providing?

Was eternal Life, that free Gift of God in *Christ Jesus*, to be purchased with Money; or could Men carry their Stocks beyond the Grave, to buy Oil for their Lamps, *i. e.* Grace for their Hearts, when they should be called to meet the Bridegroom, there might be some Reason why God might well bear with them: But since their Money is to perish with them; since it is certain, as they brought nothing into the World, so they can carry nothing out; or supposing they could, since there is no Oil to be bought, *i. e.* no Grace to be purchased when once the Lamp of their natural Life is gone out; Would it not be much more prudent to spend the short Time they have here allotted them in buying Oil while it may be had,
and

and not for Fear of having a little less of that which will quickly be another Man's, eternally lose the true Riches?

What think you? Is it to be supposed that it grieved that covetous Worldling before mentioned, when his Soul sprung into the World of Spirits, that he could not stay here 'till he had pulled down his Barns and built greater? Or think you not that all Things here below seemed equally little to him then, and he only repented that he had not employed more Time in pulling down every high Thought that exalted itself against the Almighty, and building up his Soul in the Knowledge and Fear of God?

They may, for a Season, seem excellently well employed in being solicitously careful about the important Concerns of this Life; but when once their Eyes are opened by Death, and their Souls launched into Eternity, they will then see the Littleness of all sublunary Cares, and wonder they should be so besotted to the Things of another Life, while they were, it may be, applauded for their great Wisdom and profound Sagacity in the Affairs of this World.

Alas! how will they bemoan themselves for acting like the unjust Steward so very wisely in their temporal Concerns, in calling their respective Creditors so carefully, and asking how much every one owes to them, and yet never remembering to call themselves to an Account, or enquire how much they owed their own great Lord and Master?

And

And now, what should I say more? The God of this World, and the inordinate Desire of other Things must have wholly stifled the Conscience of that Man, who does not see the Force of these plain Reasonings.

Permit me only to add a Word or two to the Rich, and Persons that are freed from the Business of this Life.

But here I must pause a While, for I am sensible that it is but an ungrateful, and, as some may imagine, an assuming Thing, for such a Novice in Religion to take upon him to instruct Men in high Stations, and who perhaps would disdain to set me with the Dogs of their Flock.

But however, since St. Paul, who knew what best became a young Preacher, commanded Timothy, young as he was, to exhort and charge the Rich with all Authority, I hope, none here, that are so, will be offended, if with Humility I beg Leave to remind them, though they once knew, that if Persons in the most busy Employments are indispensably obliged to *work out their Salvation with Fear and Trembling*, much more ought they to do so, who are free from the Toils and Incumbrance of a lower Way of Life, and, consequently, have greater Opportunities and Leisure to prepare themselves for a future State.

But is this really the Case, or do we not find by fatal Experience that to many of those whom God has exalted above their Brethren,
who

who are cloathed in Purple and fine Linnen, and fare sumptuously every Day, by a very sad Abuse of God's great Bounty towards them, think that their Stations set them above Religion, and so let the Poor, who live by the Sweat of their Brows, attend more constantly on the Means of Grace than they.

But, Woe unto such rich Men ! for they have received their Consolation. Happy had it been if they had never been born : For if the careless irreligious Tradesman cannot be saved, where will the luxurious and wicked Gentlemen appear ?

Let me, therefore, by Way of Conclusion, exhort all Persons, High and Low, Rich and Poor, one with another, to make the Renewal of their fallen Nature the one Business of their Lives ; and to let no worldly Profit, no worldly Pleasure divert them from the Thoughts of it. Let this Cry, *Behold the Bridegroom cometh*, be ever sounding in our Ears ; and let us live as Creatures that are every Moment liable to be hurried away by Death to Judgment : Let us remember that this Life is a State of infinite Importance, a Point between two Eternities, and that after these few Days are ended, there will remain no more Sacrifice for Sin ; let us be often asking our selves, How we shall wish we had lived when we leave the World ? And then we shall always live in such a State as we shall never fear to die in. So that whether we live, we shall live unto the Lord ; or whether we die,

die, we shall die unto the Lord; for that living or dying we may be the Lord's.

To which End, let us beseech God, the Protector of all them that put their Trust in him, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy to increase and multiply upon his Mercy, that he being our Ruler and Guide, we may so pass through Things Temporal, that we finally lose not the Things Eternal; through *Jesus Christ* our Lord.

F I N I S.

S E R M O N XII.

T H E

M A R K S

O F T H E

N E W B I R T H ;

O R,

The different States of N A T U R E
and of G R A O E described.

John viii. 5, 6. — *Except a Man be born of Water
and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the King-
dom of God. That which is born of the Flesh, is
Flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit, is
Spirit.*

By GEORGE WHITEFIELD, A.B
of Pembroke-College, Oxford.

L O N D O N :

Printed for C. DAVIS, at D'Anvers's-Head,
in the Old-Bailey

M DCC XXXIX.

SEERMON XII.

THE

MARKS

OF THE

NEW BIRTH;

OR,

The different States of Nature
and of Grace described.

John viii. 56. — I know a Man is born of Water
and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the King-
dom of God. This saith a man of the Flesh, is
false, and that which is born of the Spirit, is
true.

By GEORGE WHITEHEAD, A.B.
of Pembroke College, Oxford.

L O N D O N :

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in the Old-Bath.

M D C C X V I.



SERMON XII.

The MARKS of the NEW BIRTH.

A C T S xix. 5.

Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?



WO Constructions have been given us of these Words; some have supposed, that the Question here put, is, Whether these Disciples, whom St. Paul found at *Ephesus*, after he had passed through the upper Coasts, had received the Holy Ghost, by Imposition of Hands at Confirmation. ----- Others think, that these Disciples had been already baptised into *John's* Baptism; but that not being attended with an immediate Effusion of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle here asks them, *Whether they had received the Holy Ghost by being baptised into Jesus Christ?* And upon their answering in the Negative, he first baptised, and then confirmed them in the Name of the Lord *Jesus Christ*.

Which of these Interpretations is most true, is neither easy nor very necessary to determine. However, as the Words contain a most important Enquiry, without any Reference to the Context, I shall from them draw these two General Heads of Discourse.

I. *First*, I shall shew who the Holy Ghost, here spoken of, is; and how we must all receive him before we can be stiled *True Believers*.

II. *Secondly*, I shall lay down some Scripture Marks, whereby we may know, *Whether we have thus received the Holy Ghost, or not.*

III. *Thirdly*, By Way of Conclusion, I shall address myself to several distinct Classes of Professors, concerning the Doctrine that shall have been delivered.

I. And *First*, I am to shew who the Holy Ghost, spoken of in the Text is; and how we must all receive him e're we can be stiled *True Believers*.

By the Holy Ghost here spoken of, is signified the Holy Spirit, --- the third Person in the ever blessed Trinity, --- consubstantial, and co-eternal wit the Father and the Son, --- proceeding from, yet equal to them both. --- He is emphatically called *Holy*, because infinitely Holy in himself, and the Author and Finisher of all Holiness in us.

This blessed Spirit, who once moved on the Face of the great Deep, who overshadowed the Blessed Virgin before that Holy Thing was born of her, who descended in a bodily Shape like a Dove on our Blessed Lord, when he came up out
of

of the Water at his Baptism; and lighted afterwards in fiery Tongues on the Heads of all his Apostles at the Day of *Pentecost*; this is the Holy Ghost, who must move on the Faces of our Souls; this Power of the Most High must come upon us, and we must be baptised with his Baptism and refining Fire, before we can be stiled True Members of its mystical Body.

Thus, says the Apostle, *Know ye not that Christ is in you?* that is, by his Spirit, *unless you are Reprobates?* Now if any Man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And again, St. John, *We know that we are his by the Spirit that he hath given us.*

It is not indeed necessary that we should have it now given in that miraculous Manner in which it was at first given to our Lord's Apostles, by Signs and Wonders. But it is absolutely necessary that we should receive the Holy Ghost in his sanctifying Graces as really as they did, and so will it continue to be till the End of the World.

For thus stands the Case between God and Man. God at first made Man upright, or as the sacred Penman expresses it, *In the Image of God made he Man*, that is, his Soul was the very Copy, the Transcript of the Divine Nature. He that before had by his Almighty Fiat spoke the World into Being; breatheth into Man the spiritual Life, and his Soul became adorned with all the Perfections of the Deity. This was the finishing Stroke of the Creation: The Perfection both of the moral and material World, and so near resembled its Divine Original, that God could not but rejoice, and take Pleasure in his own Likeness. And therefore we read, that when God had finished the inanimate

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Parts of the Creation, he looked upon it, and behold it was *Good*; but when that lovely Godlike Creature, *Man*, was made, behold it was *very Good*.

Happy then, unspeakably happy must Man needs be, who was thus Partaker of the Divine Nature; and thus might we have still continued, had he still continued Holy. --- But God had placed him in a State of Probation, with a free Grant to eat of every Tree in the Garden of *Eden*, except the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. The Day he did eat thereof he was surely to die; that is, not only to be subject to temporal, but spiritual Death, and consequently to lose that Divine Image, that spiritual Life God had not long since breathed into him, and which was as much his Happiness as his Glory.

These, one would imagine, were easy Conditions for a finite Creature's Happiness to depend on. But Man, unhappy Man, being seduced by the Devil, and desiring like him, to be equal with his Maker, eat of the forbidden Fruit, and thereby became liable to that Curse which the Eternal God, who cannot lie, had denounced against his Disobedience.

Accordingly we read, that soon after *Adam* had fallen, he complained that he was naked. Naked not only as to his Body, but Naked and left destitute of those Divine Graces, which before decked and beautified his Soul. --- The unhappy Mutiny and disorder which the visible Creation fell into, those Briars and Thorns which now sprung up and overspread the Earth, were but poor Emblems, but lifeless Representations of that Confusion and Rebellion, those divers Lusts and Passions which sprung up in, and quite overwhelmed the Soul of Man
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immediately after the Fall:--- Alas! he was now no longer the Image of the invifible God; but as he had imitated the Devil's Sin, he became Partaker of the Devil's Nature, and from an Union with, funk into a State of direct Enmity againft God.

Now in this dreadful difordered Condition are all of us brought into the World. --- For as the Root is, fuch muft the Branches be. Accordingly we are told, that *Adam* begat a Son in his own Likeneſs, that is, with the ſame corrupt Nature which he himſelf had funk into after he had eaten the forbidden Fruit. And Experience, as well as Scripture proves, that we alſo are altogether born in Sin and Corruption, and therefore incapable, whilft in ſuch a State, to hold Communion with God. For as Light cannot have Communion with Darkneſs, ſo God can have no Communion with ſuch polluted Sons of *Belial*.

Here then appears the End and Deſign why *Chriſt* was made manifeſt in the Fleſh, — viz. to put an End to theſe Diſorders, and to reſtore us to that primitive Dignity, in which we were at firſt created. Accordingly he ſhed his precious Blood to ſatisfy his Father's Juſtice for our Sins, and thereby alſo he purchaſed again for us the Holy Ghoſt, who ſhould once more reſtamp the Divine Image upon our Hearts, and make us capable of living with and enjoying God.

This, I ſay, was the only End of our Lord's coming into the World:--- Nay, this is the only End why the World itſelf is now kept in Being. For as ſoon as a ſufficient Number are ſanctified out of it, the Heavens ſhall be wrapped up like a Scroll, the Elements ſhall melt with fervent Heat, the Earth and all that therein is to be burnt up.

This is that new Birth mentioned by our blessed Lord to *Nicodemus*, without which we cannot see the Kingdom of God. This is what *St. Paul* calls being renewed in the Spirit of our Minds, and herein consists that Holiness without which no Man shall see the Lord.

In this manner then it is undeniably certain we must receive the Holy Ghost, e're we can be filed true Members of *Christ's* mystical Body.

II. I come now, in the *Second* Place, to lay down some scriptural Marks, wherehy we may easily judge whether we have received the Holy Ghost or not.

And the *First* Mark I shall mention is — our having received a Spirit of Prayer and Supplication: For that always accompanies the Spirit of Grace. No sooner was *Paul* converted, but behold he prayeth, says *Jesus Christ*. And this was urged as an Argument to convince *Ananias* that he was converted. And God's Elect are said to cry to him Day and Night.

For since one great Work of the holy Spirit is to convince us of Sin, and to set us upon seeking Pardon and renewing Grace thro' the All-sufficient Merits of a crucified Redeemer, whosoever has felt the Powers of the World to come awakening him from his spiritual Lethargy, cannot but be always crying out, Lord, what wouldst thou have me do? Or in the Language of the importunate blind *Bartimeus*, Jesus, thou Son of *David*, have Mercy upon me.

The blessed *Jesus*, as he received the Holy Ghost without Measure, so he evidenced it by nothing more than his frequent Addresses to the Throne

Throne of Grace. Accordingly we read, that he was alone on the Mountain praying — That he rose a {great while before Day to pray. Nay, that he spent whole Nights in Prayers. And who-soever is made Partaker of the same Mind, will delight in nothing so much as to draw nigh unto God, and lift up holy Hands and Hearts in fervent and devout Prayer.

It must be confessed indeed that this Spirit of Supplication is often as it were sensibly lost, and decays for some Time even in those who have actually spiritual Dryness and Barrenness of Soul, find in themselves a Listlessness and Backwardness to this Duty of Prayer ; — but then they take it as their Cross, and still persevere in seeking *Jesus* tho' it be sorrowing. And their Hearts notwithstanding are fixed upon God, tho' they cannot exert their Affections so strongly as usual, on Account of their spiritual Deadness which God for his wise Reasons has suffered to benumb their Souls.

But as for the formal Believer, it is not so with him. No, he either prays not at all, or if he does enter into his Closet, it is with Reluctance — out of Custom --- or to satisfy the Checks of his Conscience --- Whereas the true Believer can no more live without Prayer, than without Food Day by Day. And he finds his Soul as really and perceptibly fed by the one, as his Body is nourished and supported by the other.

A Second Scripture Mark of our having received the Holy Ghost is ——— not committing Sin. ———

Who-soever is born of God, says St. John, sinneth not, neither can he sin, because his Seed remaineth in

in him --- Neither can he sin. This Expression does not imply the Impossibility of a spiritual Man's sinning. For we are told, that in many Things we offend all. It means only thus much; that a Man that is really born again of God, doth not wilfully commit Sin, much less live in the habitual Practice of it. For how shall he that is dead to Sin, as every converted Person is, live any longer therein?

'Tis true, a Man that is born again of God may, thro' Surprize or Violence of a Temptation, fall into an Act of Sin. Witness the Adultery of *David* and *Peter's* Denial of his Master. But then, like them, he quickly rises again, goes out from the Guilt of Sin away by the Tears of a sincere Repentance, joined with Faith in the Blood of *Jesus Christ*; takes double Heed to his Ways for the future, and perfects Holiness in the Fear of God.

The Meaning of this Expression of the Apostle, that a Man that is born again of God, cannot commit Sin, has been * fitly illustrated in the Example of a covetous Worldling, to the general Bent of whose Inclinations, Liberality and Profuseness are directly opposite. But if, upon some unexpected sudden Occasions, he does play the Prodigal, he immediately repents him of his Faults; and returns with double Care to his Savingness again. --- And so is every one that is born again. To commit Sin is as contrary to the habitual Frame and Tendency of his Mind, as Generosity is to the Inclination of a Miser. But if at any Time he is drawn into Sin, he immediately with double Zeal returns to his Duty, and brings forth Fruits meet for Repentance.

Whereas

* *Law's Christian Perfection.*

The Marks of the New Birth.

11

Whereas the unconverted Sinner is quite dead in Trespases and Sins, --- as if he does abstain from the gross Acts of it, from worldly selfish Motives, yet there is some Right Eye he will not cut off; some specious *Agag* that he will not sacrifice for God; and thereby he is convinced that he is but a mere *Saul*; and consequently, whatever Pretensions he may make to the contrary, he has not yet received the Holy Ghost.

A Third Mark whereby we may know whether or not we have received the Holy Ghost is, --- our Conquest over the World. --- For *whoe-
ver is born of God*, says the Apostle, *overcometh
the World*. --- By the World we are to understand, as St. *John* expresses it, all that is in the World, the Lust of the Eye, the Lust of the Flesh, and Pride of Life. --- And by overcoming of it is meant our renouncing these, so as not to follow or be led by them. --- For whosoever is born from above, has his Affections set on Things above: He feels a Divine Attraction in his Soul, which forcibly draws his Mind Heavenwards; and as the Heart panteth after the Water-Brooks, so doth it make his Soul to long after the Enjoyment of his God.

Not that he is so taken up with the Affairs of another Life, as to neglect the Business of this. No, a truly spiritual Man dares not stand any Day idle: But then he takes Care, though he laboureth for the Meat which perisheth, first to secure that which endureth to everlasting Life. Or if God has exalted him above his Brethren, yet, like *Moses*, *Joseph*, and *Daniel*, he notwithstanding looks upon himself as a Stranger and Pilgrim upon Earth.

Having

Having received a Principle of new Life, he walks by Faith and not by Sight.— And his Hopes being full of Immortality, he can look on all Thing here below as Vanity and Vexation of Spirit. — In short, tho' he is in, yet he is not of the World : And as he was made for the Enjoyment of God, so nothing but God can satisfy his Soul.

The ever Blessed *Jesus* was a perfect Instance of overcoming the World. For though he went continually about doing Good, and always lived in a Press, yet wherever he was, his Conversation tended Heavenwards. In like Manner he that is joined to the Lord in one Spirit, will so order his Thoughts, Words, and Actions aright, that he will evidence to all, that his Conversation is in Heaven.

On the contrary, an unconverted Man being of the Earth, is earthy : And having no spiritual Eye to discern spiritual Things, is always seeking for Happiness in this Life, where it never was, will, or can be found. Being not born again from above, he is bowed down by a Spirit of natural Infirmary ; the Serpent's Curse becomes his Choice, and he eats of the Dust of the Earth all the Days of his Life.

A *Fourth* Scripture Mark of our *New Birth*, or of our having received the Holy Ghost is, — our loving one another.

We know, says St. *John*, *we are passed from Death unto Life, because we love the Brethren. And by this*, says *Jesus Christ*, *shall all Men know, that you are my Disciples, if ye have Love one towards another.* — Love is the fulfilling of the Gospel, as well as the Law ; for God is Love, and whosoever dwelleth in God, dwelleth in Love.

But

But by this Love we are not to understand a Softness and Tenderneſs of meer Nature, or a Love founded on worldly Motives (for this a natural Man may have) but a Love of our Brethren proceeding from a Love towards God. Loving all Men in general, becauſe God loves all, and loving good Men in particular, for the Grace we ſee in them, and becauſe they love our Lord *Jeſus* in Sincerity.

This is *Chriſtian* Charity, and that new Commandment which *Chriſt* gave his Diſciples. New, not its for Object, but in the Motive and Example whereon it is founded, even *Jeſus Chriſt*. This is that Love which the primitive Chriſtians were ſo renowned for, that it became a Proverb — *See, how theſe Chriſtians love one another!*—And without this Love, though we ſhould give all our Goods to feed the Poor, and our Bodies to be burnt, it would profit us nothing.

Farther, this Love is not confined to any particular Set of Men, but is impartial and Catholick. A Love that embraces God's Image wherever it beholds it, and that delights in nothing ſo much as to ſee *Chriſt's* Kingdom come.

This is the Love wherewith *Jeſus Chriſt* loved Mankind. — He loved all, even the worſt of Men, as appears by his weeping over the obſtinately Perverſe; but wherever he ſaw the leaſt Appearance of the Divine Likeneſs, that Soul he loved in particular.— Thus we read, that when he heard the young Man ſay, *All theſe Things have I kept from my Youth*, that ſo far he loved him. And when he ſaw any noble Inſtance of Faith, though in a *Centurion*, a *Syrophœnician*, Aliens to the Commonwealth of *Iſrael*, how he is ſaid to marvel at it, as
Man,

Man, to rejoice in it, speak of, and commend it? So also every spiritual Disciple of *Jesus Christ* will cordially embrace all that worship God in Spirit and in Truth, howsoever they may differ as to the Appendages of Religion, and Things essentially necessary to Salvation.

I confess indeed that the Heart of a natural Man is not thus enlarged all at once; and a Person may really have received the Holy Ghost (as *Peter* no doubt had when he was unwilling to go to *Corneilius*) though he be not arrived to this. — But then we affirm, where a Person is truly in *Christ*, all Narrowness in Spirit decreases in him daily; the Partition-Wall of Bigotry and Party Zeal is broken down more and more; and the nearer he comes to Heaven; the more his Heart is enlarged with that Love which there will make no Difference between any People, Nation, or Language, but we shall all with one Heart, and one Voice, sing Praises to him that sitteth upon the Throne for ever.

But I hasten to shew a *Fifth*, and that the last Scripture Mark of our *New Birth*, that I shall at present mention, Loving our Enemies.

I say unto you, says Jesus Christ, Love your Enemies, bless them that curse you, do Good to those that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you. — And this Duty of loving our Enemies is so necessary, that without it, our Blessed Lord tells us, our Righteousness does not exceed the Righteousness of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, nay, or of *Publicans* and Sinners: For if you do Good to them only which do Good to you, what do you more than others? What do you extraordinary? Do not even the *Publicans* the same?

And

And these Precepts our Lord confirmed by his own Example, when he wept over the bloody City; when he suffered himself to be led as a Sheep to the Slaughter; when he made that mild Reply to the Traitor Judas, *Judas betrayest thou the Son of God with a Kiss?* — And more especially when in the Agonies and Pangs of Death, he prayed for his very Murderers, *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

This is the most difficult Duty to the natural Man, but whosoever is made Partaker of that Promise of the Father, will find it practicable and easy. For if we are born again of God, we must be like him; and consequently delight to be perfect in this Duty of doing Good to our worst Enemies in the same Manner, though not the same Degree, as he is perfect. --- And he sends his Rain on the Evil and the Good; causeth his Sun to shine on the Just and Unjust: And herein more especially commendeth his Love towards us, that whilst we were his Enemies, he sent forth his Son, born of a Woman, made under the Law, that he might become a Curse for us.

Many other Marks there are scattered up and down the Scriptures, whereby we may know whether or not we have received the Holy Ghost. Such as to be carnally minded is Death, but to be spiritually minded is Life and Peace. --- Now the Fruits of the Spirit are Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Meekness, with a Multitude of Texts to the same Purpose. --- But as most, if not all of them, are comprehended in the Duties already laid down, I dare affirm, whosoever, upon an impartial Examination, can find the aforesaid Marks upon his Soul, may be as certain, as though an Angel

Angel was to tell him, that his Pardon is sealed in Heaven.

And as for my own Part, I had rather see these Divine Graces, these Heavenly Tempers stamped upon my Soul, than to hear an Angel from Heaven saying unto me, *Son, be of good cheer, thy Sins be forgiven thee.*

For these are infallible Witnesses; these are *Emanuel*, God with and in us; these make up that white Stone, which none knoweth, saving he who receiveth it; these are the Earnests of the Heavenly Inheritance in our Hearts. In short, these are Glory begun, and are that good Thing, that better Part, which, if you continue to stir up this Gift of God, neither Men or Devils shall ever be able to take from us.

III. I proceed now, as was proposed, in the *Third Place*, to make an Application of the Doctrine delivered, to several distinct Classes of Professors.

And *First*, I shall address myself to those who are dead in Trespasses and Sins. --- And here how could I weep over you, as our Lord wept over *Jerusalem*! For alas! how distant must you be from God, what a prodigious Work have you got to finish, who instead of praying Day and Night, seldom or never pray at all! And instead of being born again in God, so as not to commit Sin, are! so deeply sunk into the Nature of Devils as to make a Mock at it. Or instead of overcoming the World, so as not to follow or be led by it, are continually making Provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the Lusts thereof. And lastly, instead of being
endued

endued with the Godlike Disposition of loving all Men, even your Enemies, have your Hearts full of Hatred, Malice, and Revenge, and deride those who are sincere Followers of the lowly *Jesus* — But think you, O Sinners, that God will admit such polluted Wretches into his Sight? Or, should he admit you, do you imagine you could take any any Pleasure in him? No, Heaven itself would be no Heaven to you: The Devilish Dispositions which are in your Hearts would render all the spiritual Enjoyment of those blessed Mansions ineffectual to make you happy. — To qualify you to be blisful Partakers of that Heavenly Inheritance with the Saints in Light, there is a Meetness required, to attain which ought to be the one Business of your Lives.

It is true, you, as well as the Righteous, in one Sense shall see God (for we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of *Christ*) but you must see him once, never to see him more. For as you carry about in you the Devil's Image, with Devils you must dwell. Being of the same Nature, you must share the same Doom. Repent therefore and be converted, that your Sins may be blotted out. See that you receive the Holy Ghost before you go hence: For otherwise how can you escape the Damnation of Hell?

Secondly, I shall apply myself to those who deceive themselves with false Hopes of Salvation. And because, through the Influence of a good Education, or other providential Restraint, they have not run into the same Excess of Riot with other Men, think they have no Need to receive the Holy Ghost, and flatter themselves that they are really born again.

But do you shew it by bringing forth the Fruits of the Spirit? Do you pray without ceasing? Do you commit Sin? Have you overcome the World? And do you love your Enemies, and all Mankind, in the same Manner as *Jesus Christ* loved them?

If these Things, Brethren, be in you, and abound, then may you have Confidence towards God: But if not, although you may be civilized, yet you are not converted. No, you are yet in your Sins. The Nature of the old *Adam* still reigneth in your Souls. And unless the Nature of the second *Adam* be engrafted in its Room, you can never see God.

Think not therefore to dress yourselves up in the Ornaments of a good Nature, and civil Education, and say with *Agag*, surely the Bitterness of Death is past. For God's Justice notwithstanding that, like *Samuel*, shall shew you no Peace — However you may be highly esteemed in the Sight of Men, yet in the Sight of God you are but like the Apples of *Sodom*, Dunghills covered with Snow, mere whited Sepulchres, appearing a little beautiful without, but inwardly full of Corruptions and of all Uncleanness. — And consequently will be dismissed at the last Day, with a *Verily I know you not*.

But the Word is profitable for Comfort, as well as Correction.

Thirdly, Therefore I do address myself to those who are under the Drawings of the Father, and are going through the Spirit of Bondage, but not finding the Marks before-mentioned, are ever crying out, *Who shall deliver us from the Body of this Death?*

But

But fear not, little Flock; for notwithstanding your present Infant State of Grace, it shall be your Father's good Pleasure to give you the Kingdom.

The Grace of God, through *Jesus Christ*, that shall deliver you, that shall give you what you thirst after. He hath promised he will also do it. Ye shall receive the Spirit of Adoption, that Promise of the Father, if you faint not. Only persevere in seeking it,—and determine to find no Rest in your Spirit, till you know and feel that you are thus born again from above, and God's Spirit witnesseth with your Spirits that you are the Children of God.

Fourthly and lastly, I address myself to those who have received the Holy Ghost in all its sanctifying Graces, and almost ripe for Glory.

Hail happy Saints! For your Heaven is begun on Earth. — You have already received the first Fruits of the Spirit, and are patiently waiting till that blessed Change come, when your Harvest shall be compleat. I see and admire you, tho' alas! at so great a Distance from you. — Your Life, I know, is hid with *Christ* in God. — You have Comforts, you have Meat to eat, which a sinful, carnal, ridiculing World knows nothing of. *Christ's* Yoke is now become easy to you, and his Burden light: You have passed through the Pangs of the *New Birth*, and now rejoice that the Man *Christ Jesus* is spiritually formed in your Hearts. You know what it is to dwell in *Christ*, and *Christ* in you. Like *Jacob's* Ladder, although your Bodies are on Earth, yet your Souls and Hearts are in Heaven. And by your Faith and constant Recollection, like the Blessed Angels,
you

you do always behold the Face of your Father which is in Heaven.

I need not then exhort you to press forward: For you know that in walking by the Spirit there is great Reward. Rather will I exhort you in Patience to possess your Souls yet a little while, and *Jesus Christ* will deliver you from your Burden of the Flesh, and an abundant Entrance shall be administered unto you into the eternal Joy and uninterrupted Felicity of his Heavenly Kingdom.

Which God of his infinite Mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, Three Persons and One God, be ascribed all Honour, Power, and Glory, for ever and ever.

SERMON

S E R M O N XIII.

The P O W E R O F C H R I S T's R E S U R R E C T I O N ;

O R,
A Resurrection from Sin, to a Life
of Righteousness, the chief End of
CHRIST's rising from the Dead.

1 Pet. i. 3. *Blessed be the God and Father of our
Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abun-
dant Mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively
Hope, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the
Dead.*

By GEORGE WHITEFIELD, A.B.
of Pembroke-College, Oxford.

L O N D O N:

Printed for C. DAVIS, at D'Anvers's Head,
in Chancery-Lane.

M DCC XXXIX.

SERMON XII.

The Power

OF CHRIST

RESURRECTION;

OR,

A Reclamation from Sin to a Life
of Righteousness, the chief End of
Christ's rising from the Dead.

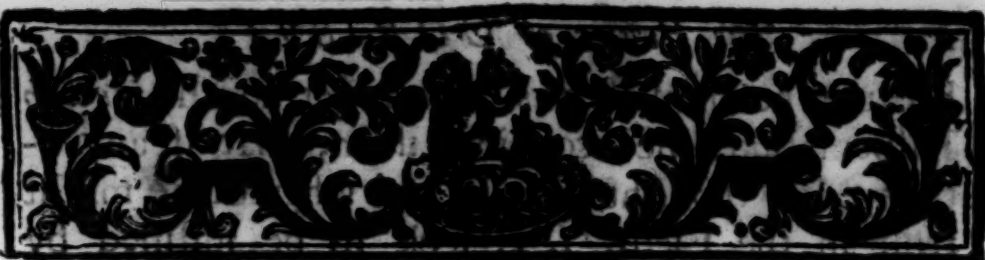
1 Peter i. 3. Blessed be the God and Father of our
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dant mercy, by his resurrection of Jesus Christ from the
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L O N D O N :

Printed for C. DAVIS, at D. Newman's Head,
in Guttery Lane.

MDCCLXXXIX.



SERMON XIII.

The Power of CHRIST's Resurrection.

PHILIP. iii. 10.

That I may know Him, and the Power of His Resurrection.

HE Apostle, in the Verses going before the Text, had been cautioning the *Philippians* to beware of the Concision, *i. e.* of some *Judaizing Teachers*, who endeavoured to subvert the Simplicity of the Gospel, by telling them, they still ought to be subject to Circumcision, and all the other Ordinances of *Moses*.

And that they might not think he spoke out of Prejudice, and condemned their Tenets,
A because

4. *The Power of CHRIST.*

because he himself was a Stranger to the *Jewish Dispensation*, he acquaints them, that if any other Man thought that he had whereof he might trust in the *Flesh*, *i. e.* seek to be justified by the outward Privileges of the *Jews*, he had more. For he was circumcised the eighth Day, of the Stock of *Israel*, *i. e.* not a Proselyte, but a native *Israelite*, of the Tribe of *Benjamin*; the Tribe which adhered to *Judah*, when the others revolted; and *Hebrew* of the *Hebrews*; a *Jew* both on the Father's and Mother's Side; as touching the Law, a *Pharisee*, the strictest Sect amongst all *Israel*. - - - And to shew he was no *Gallio* in Religion, on Account of his great tho' misguided Zeal, he had persecuted the Church of *Christ*; and as touching the Righteousness of the Law, as far as the *Pharisees* Exposition of it went, he was blameless, and had kept it from his Youth. - - - But, says he, when it pleased *GOD*, who separated me from my Mother's Womb, to reveal his Son in me, what Things were Gain to me, those Privileges I boasted myself in, and sought to be justified by, I counted Loss for *Christ*. And that they might not think that it repented him that he had done so, he tells them, he was now more confirmed than ever in his Judgment. For, says he, yea doubtless (the Expression in the Original rises with a holy Triumph) and even now I count all Things but Loss for the Excellency of the Knowledge of *Christ Jesus* my Lord. - - - And that they might not object that he said and did not, he acquaints them, he had given Proofs of the Sincerity of these

these Professions, because for the Sake of them he had suffered the Loss of all his worldly Things, and still was willing to do more; for, says he, I count them but Dung, (no more than Offals thrown out for the Dogs) so that I may win or have a saving Interest in *Christ*, and be found in him (as the Manslayer in the City of Refuge) not having my own Righteousness which is of the Law, not depending on having *Abraham* for my Father, or any Works of Righteousness which I have done, either to atone or serve as a Balance for my Evil Deeds, but that which is through the Faith of *Christ*, the Righteousness which is of God by Faith. *i. e.* A Righteousness of God's appointing, and which will be imputed to me, if I believe in *Christ*, - - - that I may know him, *i. e.* *Christ*, and the Power of his Resurrection; that I may have an experimental Knowledge of the Efficacy of his Resurrection, by feeling the Influences of his Blessed Spirit on my Soul. In which Words two Things are implied:

First, That *JESUS CHRIST* did rise from the Dead.

Secondly, That it highly concerns us to know the Power of his Rising again.

Accordingly in the following Discourse I shall endeavour to shew,

because he himself was a Stranger to the *Jewish* Dispensation, he acquaints them, that if any other Man thought that he had whereof he might trust in the Flesh, *i. e.* seek to be justified by the outward Privileges of the *Jews*, he had more. For he was circumcised the eighth Day, of the Stock of *Israel*, *i. e.* not a Proselyte, but a native *Israelite*, of the Tribe of *Benjamin*; the Tribe which adhered to *Judah*, when the others revolted; and *Hebrew* of the *Hebrews*; a *Jew* both on the Father's and Mother's Side; as touching the Law, a *Pharisee*, the strictest Sect amongst all *Israel*. - - - And to shew he was no *Gallio* in Religion, on Account of his great tho' misguided Zeal, he had persecuted the Church of *Christ*; and as touching the Righteousness of the Law, as far as the *Pharisees* Exposition of it went, he was blameless, and had kept it from his Youth. - - - But, says he, when it pleased GOD, who separated me from my Mother's Womb, to reveal his Son in me, what Things were Gain to me, those Privileges I boasted myself in, and sought to be justified by, I counted Loss for *Christ*. And that they might not think that it repented him that he had done so, he tells them, he was now more confirmed than ever in his Judgment. For, says he, yea doubtless (the Expression in the Original rises with a holy Triumph) and even now I count all Things but Loss for the Excellency of the Knowledge of *Christ Jesus* my Lord. - - - And that they might not object that he said and did not, he acquaints them, he had given Proofs of the Sincerity of these

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First, That *JESUS CHRIST* did rise from the Dead.

Secondly, That it highly concerns us to know the Power of his Rising again.

Accordingly in the following Discourse I shall endeavour to shew,

First, That *CHRIST* is risen indeed from the Dead; and that it was necessary for him so to do; and,

Secondly, That it highly concerns us to know and experience the Power of his Resurrection.

That *JESUS* should rise from the Dead was absolutely necessary; first on his own Account: For he had often appealed to this as the last and most convincing Proof he would give them that he was the true Messiah, - - - *There shall no other Sign be given you, says he, than the Sign of the Prophet Jonas. - - - - - And again, Destroy this Temple of my Body, and in three Days I will build it up. - - - - -* Which Words his Enemies remembered, and urged it, as an Argument, to induce *Pilate*, to grant them a Watch, to prevent his being stolen out of the Grave, --- *We know that that Deceiver said, whilst he was yet alive, After three Days I will rise again. - - -* So that had he not risen again, they might have justly said, We know that this Man was an Impostor.

Secondly, It was necessary on our Account,--- *He rose again, says the Apostle, for our Justification; i. e.* that the Debt we owed to God for our Sins might be fully satisfied and discharged.

I had

It had pleased the Father (for ever adored be his infinite Love and free Grace) to wound his only Son for our Transgressions, and to arrest and confine him in the Prison of the Grave, as our Surety for the Guilt we had contracted, by setting at nought his Commandments. Now, had *Christ* continued always in the Grave, we could have had no more Assurance that our Sins were satisfied for, than any common Debtor can have of his Creditor's being satisfied whilst his Surety is kept confined. - - - But he being released from the Power of Death, we are thereby assured that in his Sacrifice God was well pleased, - - - that our Atonement was finished on the Cross; and that he had made a full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation, and Satisfaction for the Sins of the whole World.

Thirdly, It was necessary that our Lord *Jesus* should rise again from the Dead, to assure us of the Certainty of the Resurrection of our own Bodies.

The Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body was entirely exploded and set at nought among the *Gentiles*, as appears from the *Athenians* mocking at and calling *St. Paul* a Babler and a Setter forth of strange Doctrines, when he preached to them *JESUS*, and the *Resurrection*. And though it was believed by most of the *Jews*, as is evident from many Passages of Scripture; yet not by all; the whole Sect of the *Sadducees* denied it. But the *Resurrection* of *JESUS*

CHRIST put it out of Dispute. For, as he acted as our Representative, if he our Head be risen, then must we also, who are his Members, rise with him. And as in the first *Adam* we all died, even so in him our second *Adam* we must all in this Sense be made alive.

As it was necessary upon all these Accounts, that our Blessed Lord should rise from the Dead; so it is plain beyond Contradiction, that he did. Never was any Matter of Fact better attested. Never were more Precautions made Use of to prevent a Cheat. - - - - - He was buried in a Sepulchre, hewn out of a Rock, so that it could not be said that any digged under, and conveyed him away. It was a Sepulchre also wherein never Man before was laid; so that if any Body did rise from thence, it must be the Body of *Jesus of Nazareth*. Besides, the Sepulchre was sealed, and a great Stone rolled to the Mouth of it; and a Band of Soldiers (consisting not of his Friends, but of his professed Enemies) was set to guard it. And as for his Disciples coming by Night and stealing him away, it was altogether impossible. For, it was not long since that they had all forsaken him, and they were the most backward in believing his Resurrection. And supposing it was true that they came whilst the Soldiers slept; yet the Soldiers must be cast into a deep Sleep indeed, that the rolling away so great a Stone did not awake some of them.

And our Blessed Lord's afterwards Appearing at sundry Times, and in divers Manners, to his Disciples, when they were assembled together, when

when they were walking to *Emmaus*, when they were fishing; nay, and condescending to shew them his Hands and Feet; and his at length appearing to above five hundred Brethren at once, put the Truth of his Resurrection out of all Dispute.

Indeed, there is one Objection that may be made against what has been said, That the Books wherein these Facts are recorded were written by his Disciples.

And who more proper Persons than those who were Eye-Witnesses of all what they related, and eat and drank with him after his Resurrection. "But, they were illiterate and ignorant Men." Yet, as good Witnesses of a plain Matter of Fact, as the most learned Masters in *Israel*. Nay, this rendered them more proper Witnesses. For, being plain Men, they were therefore less to be suspected of telling or making a Lie; more particularly, since they laid down their Lives for a Testimony of the Truth of it.

We read indeed of *Jacob's* telling a Lie, tho' he was a plain Man, in Order to get his Father's Blessing. But, it was never heard since the World began, that any Man, much less a whole Set of Men, died Martyrs for the Sake of an Untruth, when they themselves were to reap no Advantage from it.

No, this single Circumstance proves them to be *Israelites*, indeed, in whom was no Guile. - - And the wonderful Success GOD gave to their Ministry afterwards, when Three Thousand were converted

converted by one Sermon, and twelve poor Fishermen, in a very short Time, were enabled to be more than Conquerors over all the Oppositions Men or Devils could make, was as plain a Demonstration, that *Christ* was risen, according to their Gospel, as that a Divine Power, at the Sound of a few Ram's Horns, caused the Walls of *Jericho* to fall down.

But, what need we any farther Witnesses? Believe you the Resurrection of our Blessed Lord? I know that you believe it, as your Gathering together, even on this first Day of the Week in the Courts of the Lord's House, abundantly testifies.

What concerns us most to be assured of, and which is the

Second Thing which I was to speak to, is, - -

- - Whether we have experimentally known the *Power of his Resurrection*; that is, *Whether or not we have received the Holy Ghost*, and by his powerful Operations on our Hearts been raised from the Death of Sin, to a Life of Righteousness, and true Holiness.

It was this the great Apostle was chiefly desirous to know. - - - The Resurrection of *Christ's* Body, he was satisfied, would avail him nothing, unless he experienced the Power of it in raising his dead Soul.

For another, and that a chief End of our Blessed Lord's rising from the Dead, was to enter

ter Heaven as our Representative, and to send down the Holy Ghost to apply that Redemption he had finished on the Cross to our Hearts, by working an entire Change in them.

Without this, *Christ* would have died in vain. For it would have done us no Service to have had his outward Righteousness imputed to us, unless we had an inward inherent Righteousness wrought in us.—Because being altogether conceived and born in Sin, and consequently unfit to hold Communion with an infinitely pure and holy God, we cannot possibly be made meet to see or enjoy him, 'till a thorough Renovation has passed upon our Hearts.

Without this, we leave out the Holy Ghost in the great Work of our Redemption. - - - But, as we were made by the joint Concurrence and Consultation of the Blessed Trinity, and as we are baptized in their Name, - - - so must all of them concur in rendring that Baptism effectual to our Salvation : As the Father made, and the Son redeemed, so must the Holy Ghost sanctify and seal us, or, otherwise, we have believed in vain.

This then is what the Apostle means by the Power of *Christ's* Resurrection ; and this is what we are as much concerned experimentally to know, as that he rose at all.

Without this, though we may be Moralists, though we may be civilized, good natured People, yet we are no Christians—For he is not a true Christian, who is only one outwardly ; nor have we therefore a right Faith, because we
daily

daily profess to believe that *Christ* rose again, the third Day, from the Dead. But, he is a true Christian, who is one inwardly; and then only can we be stiled true Believers, when we not only profess to believe, but have felt the Power of our Blessed Lord's rising from the Dead, by being quickned and raised by his Spirit, when dead in Trespases and Sins, to a thorough Newness both of Heart and Life.

The Devils themselves cannot but believe the Doctrine of the Resurrection, and tremble - - But yet they continue Devils, because the Benefits of this Resurrection have not been applied to them, nor have they received a renovating Power from it to change and put off their diabolical Nature - - And so likewise, unless we not only profess to know, but also feel that *Christ* is risen indeed, by being born again from above, we shall be as far from the Kingdom of God as they, our Faith will be as ineffectual as the Faith of the Devils.

Nothing has done more Harm to the Christian World; nothing has rendred the Cross of *Christ* of less Effect than a vain Supposition, that Religion is something without us - - - Whereas we should consider that every Thing that *Christ* did outwardly, must be done over-again in our Souls; or otherwise believing there was such a divine Person once on Earth, who triumphed over Hell and the Grave, will profit us more, than believing there was once such a Person as *Alexander*, who conquered the World.

As *Christ* was born of the Virgin's Womb, so must he be spiritually formed in our Hearts - - As
He

RESURRECTION.

13

He died for Sin, so must we die to Sin. And as He rose again from the Dead, so must we also rise to a divine Life.

None but those who have followed him in this Regeneration, or new Birth, shall sit on Thrones, as Approvers of his Sentence, when he shall come in terrible Majesty to judge the twelve Tribes of *Israel*.

'Tis true, as for the outward Work of our Redemption, it was a transient Act, and was certainly finished on the Cross - - - But the Application of that Redemption to our Hearts is a Work that will continue always, even unto the End of the World.

So long as there is a Man breathing on the Earth, who is naturally engendred of the Offspring of the first *Adam*, so long must the quickening Spirit which was purchased by the Resurrection of the second *Adam*, that Lord from Heaven, be Breathing upon his Soul.

For, though we may exist by *Christ*, yet we cannot be said to exist in him, 'till we are united to him by one Spirit, and enter into a new State of Things, as certainly as He entered into a new State of Things, after that he rose from the Dead.

We may throng, crowd around, and about *Christ*, and call him Lord, Lord, when we come to worship before his Footstool; but we have not effectually touched him, 'till by a lively Faith in his Resurrection, we perceive a Divine Virtue coming out of Him, to renew and purify our Souls.

How

How greatly then do all they err who rest only in a bare historical Faith of our Saviour's Resurrection, and look no farther than for external Proofs, to evidence it? Whereas, were we the most learned and most able Disputers of this World, and could speak of the Certainty of this Fact with the Tongue of Men and Angels, yet, without this very inward Testimony of it in our Hearts, (though we might convince others) we should never be saved by it ourselves.

For, truly, we are but dead Men; and we are but like so many Carcasses, wrapt up in Grave Cloaths, 'till the same *JESUS*, who called *Lazarus* from his Tomb, and at whose Resurrection many that slept arose, raise us also by his quickening Spirit from our natural Death, in which we have so long lain, to a holy and heavenly Life.

We might, therefore, think ourselves happy, if we had seen the Holy *JESUS*, after He was risen from the Dead, and if our Hands had handled that Lord of Life. But, more happy are they who have not seen him, and yet having felt the Power of his Resurrection, therefore believe in him.

For, many saw our Divine Master, who were not saved by him; but, whosoever has thus felt the Power of *Christ's* Resurrection, he has the true Earnest of his heavenly Inheritance in his Heart; he has certainly passed from Death to Life, and shall never, if he still and constantly stir up the Gift of God that is in him, fall into
Con-

Condemnation ; he is saved, and, in his sincere Belief, without Danger.

But I am very sensible, and entirely persuaded, that all this is Foolishness to the Natural Man, as were many such like Truths to our Lord and Saviour's own Disciples, before he rose again : But when these natural Men, like them, have once felt the Power of his glorious Resurrection, they will then own, that this Doctrine is certain, and from GOD ; and, full of such Belief, cry out and say, with the *Samaritans*, Now we believe, not because of thy Saying, for we ourselves have experienced it in our Hearts.

And Oh ! that all such Unbelievers, all such Letter-learned Masters of *Israel*, who now look upon the Doctrine of the Power of *Christ's* Resurrection, or our new Birth, as an idle Tale, and, therefore, condemn the Preachers of it as Enthusiasts and Madmen, did but thus once feel the Power of it in their Souls, - - - - They would no longer persist in their Unbelief ; they would no longer ask, How can or may all this Thing be ? - - But, they would be convinced of it, even as much as *Thomas* was, when he saw the Lord's *Christ* ; and, like him, when *Jesus* bid him reach out his Hands, and thrust into his Side, in a holy Confusion, they would cry out, *My Lord and my God !*

But, How shall such an Unbeliever, how shall such a formal Christian come thus to know *CHRIST*, and the Power of his Resurrection ?

- - - - That God, who cannot lie, has told us,
I am

I am the Resurrection, and the Life, (says Jesus Christ) whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, - - - - -
 And again, says the Apostle, *By Faith we are saved, and that not of our selves; it is the Gift of God.*

This, this is the truest and surest Way, walk in it. - - - - - This do, and ye shall live. You shall live in *Christ*, and *Christ* in you; you shall be One with *Christ*, and *Christ* with you. - - - But, indeed, without this your outward Goodness and Professions, will avail you nothing.

But then, by this Faith, we are not to understand a dead and speculative Faith, a Faith in the Head; but a living Principle, wrought in the Heart of the Believer, by the powerful Operations of the Holy Ghost - - Such a Faith that certainly will enable us to overcome the World, and forsake all in Affection for *Jesus Christ*. For thus speaks our Blessed Master, *Unless a Man forsake all that he hath, he cannot be my Disciple.*

And so the Apostle here, in the Words immediately following the Text, says, *being made conformable to his Death*; to give us thereby to understand, that, indeed, the Knowing the Power of *Christ's* Resurrection cannot be without the being made conformable to him in his Death.

This now we have shadowed out, by the Custom of Baptizing by Immersion, in the Primitive Christian Church, and (which is likewise recom-

recommended by our own) their putting the Infants under the Water, signified their Obligation to die unto Sin ; as their taking them out of the Water, signified their rising again to Newness of Life. To which the Apostle plainly alludes, when he says, *We are buried with him in Baptism.*

Now, therefore, if we can reconcile Light and Darkness, Heaven and Hell, then we may hope to know the Power of *Christ's* Resurrection without dying to ourselves and the World.

- - - - But, 'till we can do this, we might as well expect that *Christ* will have Concord with *Belial*.

For, indeed, there is such a Contrariety between the Spirit of this World, and the Spirit of *Jesus Christ*, that he, who will be at Friendship with the One, must be at Enmity with the Other, - - - - *We cannot serve God and Mammon.*

This may, indeed, seem a very hard Saying ; and many, with the young Man in the Gospel, may be tempted to go away sorrowful ; But then, wherefore should this offend them ? For, what is all that is in the World, the Lust of the Eye, the Lust of the Flesh, and the Pride of Life, but Vanity and Vexation of Spirit ?

GOD is Love ; and therefore could our own Wills, or the World have made us happy, he never would have sent his own dear Son *Jesus Christ* to die and rise again, to deliver us from the Power of them. - - - - But because they only torment,

torment, but cannot satisfy, therefore God bids renounce them.

And any one persuaded the profane *Esau*, not to lose so glorious a Privilege merely for the Sake of gratifying a present corrupt Inclination, when he saw him about to sell his Birthright for a little red Pottage, would not every one think that Man was *Esau's* Friend? - - - And, just thus stands the Case between GOD and us. - - - By the Death and Resurrection of *Jesus Christ* we are new born to an heavenly Inheritance amongst all them which are sanctified; but our own corrupt Wills would tempt us to sell this glorious Birthright for the Vanities of the World, which, like *Esau's* red Pottage, may please us for a little While, but will soon be taken away from us. - - - God knows this, and therefore he bids us rather to renounce them for a Season, than for the short Enjoyment of them lose the Privilege of that glorious Birthright, which, by the Resurrection of our Saviour *Jesus Christ*, we are entitled.

Oh the Depth of the Riches and Excellence of Christianity! Well might the great Apostle *St. Paul* count all Things but Dung and Dross for the Excellency of the Knowledge of it. - - - Well might he desire so heartily and ardently to know *Jesus Christ*, and the Power of his Resurrection. - - - For, even on this Side Eternity, it raises us above the World, and makes us sit in heavenly Places in *Christ Jesus*.

Well might that glorious Company of Worthies,

thies, recorded in the Holy Scriptures, supported with a deep Sense of their heavenly Calling, despise the Pleasures and Profits of this Life, and wander about in Sheep-Skins, and Goat-Skins, in Dens and Caves of the Earth, being destitute, afflicted, tormented.

And oh that we were all like minded ! that we felt the Power of *Christ's* Resurrection as they did ! How should we then count all Things as Dung and Dross for the Excellency of the Knowledge of *Christ Jesus*, our Lord ! How should we then recover our primitive Dignity, trample Earth under our Feet, and with our Souls be continually gasping after God.

And what hinders but we may be thus minded ? Is *Jesus Christ*, our great High-Priest, altered from what he was ? No ; he is the same Yesterday, to Day, and for ever. - - - - - And, though he is exalted to the right Hand of God, is not ashamed to call us Brethren.

The Power of *Christ's* Resurrection is as great now as formerly, and the Holy Spirit, which was assured to us by his Resurrection, as ready and able to quicken us, who are dead in Trespasses and Sins, as any Saint that ever lived. Let us but cry, and that instantly, to him that is mighty and able to save. - - - - - Let us, in Sincerity and Truth, without secretly keeping back the least Part, renounce our selves and the World. - - - - - And then we shall be Christians indended. - - - - - And though the World may cast us out, and separate from our Company, yet *Jesus Christ* will walk with and abide in us.

And

And at the general Resurrection of the last Day, when the Voice of the Archangel and Trump of God shall bid the Sea and the Grave to give up their Dead, and all Nations shall appear before him, then will he, indeed, confess us before his Father and the holy Angels, and we shall receive that Sentence which he shall then pronounce to all that love and fear him; saying, *Come ye blessed Children of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Beginning of the World.*

Grant this, O Father, for the sake thy dear Son's sake, JESUS CHRIST our Lord, to whom with Thee and the Holy Ghost, &c.

F I N I S.

SERMON XIV.

THE DUTY

Of Searching the

SCRIPTURES;

OR,

The BIBLE the CHRISTIAN'S
sure and only Guide to Heaven.

*Prov. xxx. 5, 6. Every Word of God is pure: He
is a Shield unto them that put their Trust in him.
Add thou not unto his Words, lest he reprove
thee, and thou be found a Liar.*

By **GEORGE WHITEFIELD, A.B.**
of *Pembroke-College, Oxford,*

L O N D O N:

Printed for C. DAVIS, at *D'Anvers's-Head,*
in the Old-Bailey

M DCC XXXIX.

MEMORANDUM

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SERMON XIV.

The DUTY of searching the SCRIPTURES.

JOHN v. 39.

Search the SCRIPTURES.



WHEN the *Sadducees* came to our Blessed Lord, and put to him the Question, *whose Wife a Woman should be in the next Life, who had seven Husbands in this?* He told them, *they erred, not knowing the Scriptures* — And if we would know whence all the Errors that have overspread the Church of *Christ*, first arose, we should find they in a great Measure flowed from the same Fountain, *viz. An Ignorance of the Word of God.*

Our Blessed Lord, though he was the Eternal God, yet as Man, made it his constant Rule and Guide---And therefore, when he was asked by

the Lawyer, *Which was the great Commandment of the Law?* He referred him to his Bible for an Answer, *What readeſt thou?* — And thus, when led by the Spirit, to be tempted by the Devil, he repelled all his Assaults, with *It is written.*

A sufficient Confutation this of their Opinion, who say, “The Spirit only, and not the Spirit by the Word, is to be our Rule of Action.”— If so, our Saviour, who had the Spirit without Measure, needed not always have referred to the written Word.

But how few copy after the Example of *Christ*? How many are there, who do not regard the Word of God at all, but throw the sacred Oracles aside, as an antiquated Book, fit only for unlearned and illiterate Men?

Such Men do greatly err, not knowing what the Scriptures are, and for what they are designed.

I shall therefore in the following Discourse,

- I. *First*, Shew that it is every one's Duty to search them. And,
- II. *Secondly*, Lay down some Directions how to search them with Advantage.

By the Scriptures I understand the Law and the Prophets, and all those Books which have in all Ages been accounted Canonical, and which make up that Book commonly called, *The Bible.*

These are emphatically stiled *The Scriptures*, and in one Place, *The Scriptures of Truth*, as though no other Books deserved the Name of the Writings or Scriptures in Comparison of them.

They are not of any private Interpretation, Authority, or Invention, but Holy Men of old wrote

wrote them, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

The Foundation of God's revealing himself thus to Mankind, was our Fall in *Adam*, and the Necessity of our *New Birth* in *Christ Jesus*. And if we search the Scriptures as we ought, we shall find the Sum and Substance, the *Alpha* and *Omega*, the Beginning and End of them, has no other Tendency but to lead us to a Knowledge of ^{these} two great Truths.

All the Threats, Promises, and Precepts, all the Exhortations and Doctrines contained therein, all the Rites, and Ceremonies, and Sacrifices appointed under the *Jewish* Law; nay, almost all the Historical Parts of Holy Scripture, suppose our being fallen in *Adam*, and either point out to us a Mediator to come, or speak of him as already come in the *Flesh*.

Had Man continued in a State of Innocence, he would not have needed an outward Revelation, because the Law of God was so deeply written in the Tables of his Heart. But having eaten of the forbidden Fruit, he incurred the Divine Displeasure, and lost the Divine Image, and therefore without *Sn* outward Revelation could never tell how God would be reconciled unto him, or how he should be saved from the Misery and Darkness of his fallen Nature.

That these Truths are so, I need not refer you to any other Book than that of your own Hearts.

For unless we are fallen Creatures, whence come those abominable Corruptions which daily arise in our Hearts? We could not come thus corrupt out of the Hands of our Maker, because he being Goodness itself, could make nothing but what is

like himself, Holy, Just, and Good. And that we want to be delivered from these Disorders of our Nature is evident, because we find an Unwillingness within ourselves to own we are thus depraved, and are always striving to appear to others of a quite different Frame and Temper of Mind, than what we are.

I appeal to the Experience of the most learned Disputer against Divine Revelations, whether he does not find in himself that he is naturally Proud, Angry, Revengeful, and full of other Tempers contrary to the Purity, Holiness, and Long-Suffering of God. --- And is not this a demonstrable Proof that some way or other he is fallen from God? ---- And I appeal also whether at the same Time he finds these Hellish Tempers in his Heart, he does not strive to seem Amiable, Courteous, Kind, and Affable; and is not this as manifest a Proof that he is sensible that he is Miserable, and wants, he knows not how, to be redeemed or delivered from it?

Here then God by his Word steps in, and opens to his View such a Scene of Divine Love, and infinite Goodness in the Holy Scriptures, that none but Men, of such corrupt and reprobate Minds as our modern Deists, would shut their Eyes against it.

For what does God in his written Word do more or less, than shew thee, O Man, how thou art fallen into that Blindness, Darkness, and Misery thou feelest and complaineest of? And at the same Time points out the Way to what thou desirest, viz. ---- How thou mayest be redeemed out of it, --- by believing in, and copying after the Son of his Love.

For,

For, as I told you before, so I tell you again, upon these two Truths hangs all Divine Revelation. It being given us for no other End but to shew us our Misery, and our Happiness; our Fall and Recovery; or, in one Word, after what Manner we died in *Adam*, and how in *Christ* we may again be made alive.

Hence then arises the Necessity of searching the Scriptures. For since they are nothing else but the general Character of our Salvation, a Revelation of a Covenant made by God with Man in *Christ*, a Light to guide them into the Way of Peace: It follows, that all are obliged to read and search them, because all are equally fallen from God, all equally stand in need of being informed what they must do to be restored to, and again united with him.

How foolishly then do the disputing Infidels of this Generation act, who are continually either calling for Signs from Heaven, or seeking for outward Evidence to prove the Truth of Divine Revelation? Whereas what they so earnestly seek for is nigh unto, nay, within them. For let them but consult their own Hearts, they cannot but feel what they want--- Let them but consult the lively Oracles of God, and they cannot but see a Remedy revealed for all their Wants, and that the written Word does as exactly answer the Desire of their Hearts, as Face answers to Face in the Water.--- Where then is the Scribe, where then is the Wise, where is the Solidity of the Reasoning of the Disputers of the World? Has not God revealed himself unto them as plain as their own Hearts could wish? And yet they require a Sign. But there shall no other Sign be given them. For if they believe

not a Revelation every way so suited to their Wants, neither will they be persuaded though one should rise from the Dead.

But this Discourse is not designed so much for them that believe not, as for them who both know and believe that the Scriptures contain a Revelation that came from God, and that it is their Duty, as being chief Parties concerned, not only to read, but search them also.

I pass on therefore, as was proposed, in the second Place, to lay down some Directions how to search them with Advantage.

And *First*, Have also in View, the End for which the Scriptures were written --- to shew us the Way of Salvation by *Jesus Christ*.

Search the Scriptures, says our Blessed Lord, for they are they that testify of me ---- Look therefore always for *Christ* in the Scripture. For he is the Treasure hid in the Field, both of the Old and New Testament---- In the Old you'll find him hid under Prophecies, Types, Sacrifices and Shadows; in the New, manifested in the Flesh, to become a Propitiation for our Sin, as a Priest; and as a Prophet, to reveal the whole Will of his Heavenly Father.

Have *Christ*, and to become a Principle then of a new Life to our Souls, thus always in view when you are Reading the Word of God, and this, like the Star in the East, will guide you to the *Messiah*, will serve as a Key to every thing that is obscure, and unlock to you the Wisdom and Riches of all the Mysteries of the Kingdom of God.

Secondly,

the S C R I P T U R E S. 9

Secondly, Search the Scriptures with an humble Child-like Disposition.

For whosoever does not read them with this Temper shall in no wise enter into the Knowledge of the Things contained therein. For God hides the Sense of them from those that are wise and prudent in their own Eyes, and reveals them only to Babes in *Christ*, who think they know nothing yet as they ought to know, who hunger and thirst after Righteousness, and humbly desire to be fed with the sincere Milk of the Word, that they may grow thereby.

Fancy yourselves therefore when you are searching the Scriptures, especially when you are reading the New Testament, to be with *Mary* sitting at the Feet of the Holy *Jesus*, and be as willing to learn what God shall teach You, as *Samuel* was, when he said, *Speak, Lord, for thy Servant beareth.*

And Oh that the Unbelievers would pull down every high Thought and Imagination that exalts itself against the Revealed Will of God! Oh that they would, like new-born Babes, desire to be fed with the pure Milk of the Word! then we should have them no longer scoffing at Divine Revelation, nor would they read the Bible any more with the same Intent (the *Philistines* brought out *Sampson*) to make Sport at it, but they would see the Divine Image and Superscription written upon every Line of it. They would hear God speaking unto their Souls by it, and consequently be built up in the Knowledge and Fear of him who is the Author of it.

Thirdly, Search the Scriptures with a sincere Intention to put in Practice what you read.

For

For a Desire to do the Will of God is the only way to know it, *If any Man will do my Will, says Jesus Christ, He shall know of my Doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.* As he also speaks in another Place to his Disciples, *To you, who are willing to practice your Duty, it is given to know the Mysteries of the Kingdom of God; but to those that are without, who only want to raise Cavils against my Doctrine, all those Things are spoken in Parables, that seeing they may see and not understand, and hearing they may hear and not perceive.*

For it is but just in God to send those strong Delusions, that they may believe a Lye, and to conceal the Knowledge of himself from all such as do not seek him with a single Intention.

Jesus Christ is the same now as formerly. To those who desire to know from his Word, who he is that they may believe on and live by and to him, he will reveal himself as clearly as he did to the Woman of *Samaria*, when he said, *I that speak to thee am he*; or as he did to the Man that was born Blind, whom the *Jews* had cast out for his Name's sake, *He that talketh with thee is he.* But to those who consult his Word with a Desire neither to know him or keep his Commandments, but either merely for their Entertainment or to scoff at the Simplicity of the manner in which he is revealed, to those, I say, he never will reveal himself, though they should search the Scriptures to all Eternity. — As he never would tell those whether he was the *Messiah* or not, who put that Question to him either out of Curiosity, or that they might have whereof to accuse him.

Fourthly,

the SCRIPTURES. 11

Fourthly, In order to search the Scriptures still more effectually, make an Application of every thing you read to your own Hearts.

For whatever was written in the Book of God was written for our Learning. And what *Christ* said unto those aforetime, we must look upon as spoken to us also: For since the Holy Scriptures are nothing but a Revelation from God, how fallen Man is to be restored by *Jesus Christ*, all the Precepts, Threats, and Promises, belong to us and to our Children, as to those to whom they were immediately made known.

Thus the Apostle, when he tells us that *he lived by the Faith of the Son of God*, adds *who died and gave himself for me*. For it is this Application of *Jesus Christ* to our Hearts that makes his Redemption effectual to each of us.

And it is this Application of all the Doctrinal and Historical Parts of Scripture, when we are reading them over, that must render them profitable to us, as they were designed for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness, and make every Child of God perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good Work.

And I dare appeal to the Experience of every Spiritual Reader of Holy Writ, whether or no if he consulted the Word of God in this Manner, he was not at all Times and at all Seasons as plainly directed how to act, as tho' he had consulted the *Urim and Thummim* which was upon the *High Priest's Breast*.

For this is the Way *God* now reveals himself to Man: Not by making new Revelations, but by applying general Things that are revealed already to every particular sincere Reader's Heart.

And

And this, by the Way, answers an Objection made by those that say, “ the Word of God is not
 “ a perfect Rule of Action, because it cannot direct us how to act, or how to determine in particular Cases, or what Place to go to when we
 “ are in doubt, and therefore the Spirit, and not
 “ the Word, is to be our Rule of Action.

But this I deny, and affirm on the contrary, that God at all Times, Circumstances, and Places, though never so minute, never so particular, will, if we diligently seek the Assistance of his Holy Spirit, apply general Things to our Hearts, and thereby, to use the Words of the Holy *Jesus*, will lead us into all Truth, and give us the particular Assistance we want: But this leads me to a

Fifth Direction how to search the Scriptures with Profit. Labour to attain that Spirit by which they were wrote.

For the natural Man discerneth not the Words of the Spirit of God, because they are spiritually discerned, the Words that *Christ* hath spoken they are Spirit, and they are Life, and can be no more understood, as to the true hidden Sense and Meaning of them, by the mere natural Man, than a Person who had never learnt a Language can understand another speaking in it. The Scriptures therefore have not unfitly been compared by some to the Cloud which went before the *Israelites*, they are dark and hard to be understood by the natural Man, as the Cloud appeared dark to the *Egyptians*, but they are Light, they are Life to *Christians* indeed, as that same Cloud which seem'd dark to *Pharaoh* and his Host appeared bright and altogether glorious to the *Israel* of God.

It was the Want of the Assistance of this Spirit that made *Nicodemus*, a Teacher of *Israel*, Ruler of the *Jews*, so utterly ignorant in the Doctrine of *Regeneration*: For being only a natural Man, he could not tell how that thing could be; it was the Want of this Spirit that made our Saviour's Disciples, tho' he so frequently conversed with them, daily mistake the Nature of the Doctrines he delivered; and it is because the natural Veil is not taken off from their Hearts, that so many who pretend to search the Scriptures, yet see no farther than into the bare Letter of them, and continue entire Strangers to the hidden Sense, the Spiritual Meaning, couched under every Parable, and contained in almost all the Precepts of the Book of God.

And indeed how should it be otherwise; for God being a Spirit, he cannot communicate himself any otherwise than in a spiritual Manner to the Hearts of Men; and consequently if we are Strangers to his Spirit, we must continue Strangers to his Word, because it is altogether like himself Spiritual. Labour therefore earnestly to attain this blessed Spirit, for otherwise, your Understandings will never be opened to understand the Scriptures aright, and because Prayer is one of the most immediate Means to get this Holy Spirit.

Sixthly, Let me advise you before you read the Scripture, to pray that *Christ*, according to his Promise, would send his Spirit to guide you into all Truth; intersperse short Ejaculations whilst you are engaged in Reading, pray over every Word and Verse if possible, and when you close up the Book most earnestly beseech God, that the Words which you then have read may be inwardly engrafted into our Hearts, and bring forth in you the Fruits of Good Living. Do

Do this, and you will with a holy Violence draw down God's Holy Spirit into your Hearts, and you will experience his gracious Influences, and feel him enlightening, quickening, and inflaming your Souls by the Word of God; you will then not only read, but mark, learn, and inwardly digest what you read, and the Word of God will be Meat indeed, and Drink indeed unto your Souls; you then will be as *Apollos* was, powerful in the Scriptures, be *Scribes* ready instructed to the Kingdom of God, and bring out of the good Treasures of your Heart, Things both from the Old and New Testament, to entertain all you converse with.

One Direction more, which shall be the last, *Seventhly*, Read the Scripture constantly, or, to use our Saviour's Expression in the Text, *Search the Scriptures*, dig in them as for hid Treasure, for here's a manifest Allusion to those who dig in Mines, and our Saviour would thereby teach us that we must take as much Pains in constantly reading his Word, if we would grow thereby, as those who dig for Gold and Silver. The Scriptures contain the Deep Things of God, and therefore can never be sufficiently search'd into by a careless, superficial, cursory way of reading them, but by an industrious, close and humble Application.

The Psalmist therefore makes it the Property of a good Man that he meditates on God's Law Day and Night: *And this Book of the Law*, says God to *Josua*, *shall not go out of thy Mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein Day and Night, for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good Success. Search therefore the Scriptures*, not only devoutly but daily, for in them are the Words of eternal Life; wait constantly at Wis-
dom's

dom's Gate, and she will then, and not till then display and lay open to you her Heavenly Treasures; you that are rich are without excuse if you do not, and you that are poor ought to take heed to improve that little time you have; for *by the Scriptures you are to be acquitted, and by the Scriptures you are to be condemned at the last Day.*

But perhaps you have no Taste for this despised Book; perhaps Plays and Romances, Books of polite Entertainment, suit your Taste better; but if this be your Case, give me leave to tell you, your Taste is vitiated, and unless corrected by the Spirit and Word of God, you shall never enter into his heavenly Kingdom, for unless you delight in God here, how will you be made meet to dwell with him hereafter. — Is it a Sin then, you will say, to read useless impertinent Books? I answer, yes: And that for the same Reason, as it is a Sin to indulge useless Conversation, because both immediately tend to grieve and quench that Spirit by which alone we can be sealed to the Day of Redemption; but you may reply, *How shall we know this?* Why, put in Practice the Precept in the Text, *Search the Scriptures* in the Manner that has been recommended, and then you will be convinced of the Danger, Sinfulness, and Unsatisfactoriness of reading any other than the Book of God, or such as are written in the same Spirit; you will then say, When I was a Child, and ignorant of the Excellency of the Word of God, I read other, what the World calls harmless Books, as other Children, in Knowledge, though old in Years, have once, and still do; but now I have tasted the Word of Life, and come to a more perfect Knowledge of *Christ Jesus* my Lord; I put
away

away these childish trifling Things, and am determined to read no other Books but what lead me to a Knowledge of myself and *Christ Jesus*. *Search therefore the Scriptures*, my dear Brethren; taste and see how good the Word of God is, and then you will never leave that Heavenly Manna, that Angel's Food, to feed on those dry Husks, that light Bread, those trifling, sinful Compositions, which Men of false Taste delight themselves in; no, you will then disdain such poor Entertainment, and blush that yourselves once were fond of it. The Word of God will then be sweeter than Honey and the Honey-Comb, and dearer than Gold and Silver; your Souls by reading it will be filled, as it were, with Marrow and Fatness, and your Hearts insensibly moulded into the Spirit of its blessed Author; in short, *You will then be guided by God's Wisdom here, and conducted by the Light of his Divine Word into Glory hereafter.*

H

S E R M O N

SERMON XV.

SATAN'S DEVICES:

O R,

Rules and Directions, how to guard
against and overcome the Temp-
tations and Delusions of the De-
vil.

Lead us not into Temptation.

Lord's Prayer.

By *GEORGE WHITEFIELD*, A.B.
of *Pembroke-College, Oxford.*

L O N D O N:

Printed for *C. DAVIS*, at *D'Auvers's Head*,
in *Chancery-Lane.*

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SERMON XV.

SATAN'S DEVICES.

2 CORINTH. ii. ii.

Least Satan should get an Advantage over us; for we are not ignorant of his Devices.



THE Occasion of these Words was as follows: In the Church of *Corinth* there was an unhappy Person; who had committed such Incest as was not so much as named among the *Gentiles*, in taking his Father's Wife; but, either on Account of his Wealth, Power, or some such Reasons, like many notorious Offenders now-a-days, had not been exposed to the Censures of the Church. *St. Paul*, therefore, in his Epistle, severely chides them from this Neglect of Discipline,

4 *SATAN'S DEVICES.*

pline, and commands them in the Name of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, *When they were gathered together, to deliver such a One*, whoever he was, to Satan, *for the Destruction of the Flesh, that his Spirit might be saved in the Day of the Lord*; that is, in one Word, that they should solemnly excommunicate him; which was commonly attended with some bodily Disease, inflicted by the Devil, under whose Power the excommunicated Person was for some Time delivered.

The *Corinthians*, being obedient to the Apostle, as dear Children, no sooner received this Reproof, but they submitted to it, and cast the offending Party out of the Church. But, whilst they were endeavouring to amend one Fault, they unhappily run into another; and as they formerly had been too mild and remiss, so now they behaved towards him with too much Severity and Resentment.

The Apostle, therefore, in this Chapter, reproves this, and tells them, that sufficient, to the Offender's Shame, was *The Punishment which has been inflicted of many*; that he had now suffered enough; and that therefore, least he should be tempted to say with *Cain*, *My Punishment is greater than I can bear*; or to use the Apostle's own Words, *Least he should be swallowed up with over-much Sorrow*; they ought, now he had given Proof of his Repentance, to forgive him, to confirm their Love towards him, and so restore him in the Spirit of Meekness; *Least Satan*, says he, *to whose Bufferings he was now given, should, by tempting him to Despair, get an Advantage over us*; and

and so, by representing you as merciless and cruel, cause that Holy Name to be blasphemed by which you are called; *for we are not ignorant of his Devices*; we know very well how many subtle Ways he has to draw aside and beguile unguarded unthinking Men.

Thus then stand the Words in Relation to the Context; but as *Satan* has many Devices, as his Quiver is full of a great many other poisonous Darts, besides those which he shoots at us, to drive us to Despair, I shall consider them by themselves, and in the following Discourse shall,

First, Briefly observe, who we are to understand by *Satan*. And,

Secondly, point out to you, what are the chief Devices he generally makes Use of, to draw off Converts from *Christ*, and prescribe some Remedies against them.

The Word *Satan*, in its original Signification, means an Adversary; and, in its general Acceptation, is made Use of to point out to us the Chief of the Devils; who, for striving to be as God, was cast down from Heaven, and is now permitted, *with the Rest of his spiritual Wickednesses in high Places, to walk up and down, seeking whom he may devour*. We hear of him immediately after the Creation, when, in the Shape of a Serpent, he lay in Wait to deceive our first Parents. - - - - - He is called *Satan* in the Book of *Job*; wherein we are told, that *when*

the Sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, Satan also came amongst them. - - -

As the Scripture also speaketh in the Book of *Chronicles*, and Satan moved David to number the *People*. - - - In the *New Testament* he goes under different Denominations; sometimes he is called the *Evil One*, because he is evil in himself, and tempts us to Evil. - - - Sometimes, the *Prince of the Power of the Air*, and the *Spirit that now ruleth in the Children of Disobedience*; he is called so, because he resides chiefly in the Air; and the whole World, that is, all that are not born of God, are said to lie in him.

He is an Enemy to GOD and Goodness - - - He is a Hater of all Truth; why else did he slander God in Paradise? Why did he tell *Eve*, *You shall not surely die*? And why did he promise to give all the Kingdoms of the whole World, and the Glories of them, to *Jesus Christ*, if he would fall down and worship him?

He is full of Malice, Envy, and Revenge; for, what other Motives could induce him to molest innocent Man in Paradise? And, why is he still so watchful and restless in his Attempts to destroy us, who have done him no Wrong?

He is a Being of great Power, as appears in his being able to act on the Imagination of our Blessed Lord, so as to represent to him all the Kingdoms of the World, and the Glories of them, in a Moment of Time. As also in carrying his sacred Body, through the Air, up to
a Pin-

a Pinnacle of the Temple; and his driving a Herd of Swine so furiously into the Deep—— Nay, so great is his Might, that, I doubt not, was God to let him use his full Strength, he could turn the Earth upside down, or pull the Sun from its Orb.

But, what he is the most remarkable for, is *his Subtilty*; for, not having Power given from above to take us by Force, he is obliged to wait for Opportunities to betray us, and to catch us by Guile. He therefore made Use of the Serpent, which was subtle above all the Beasts of the Field, in order to tempt our first Parents; and accordingly he is said, in the *New Testament*, to lie in wait to deceive; and here in the Words of the Text, the Apostle says, *We are not ignorant of his Devices*; thereby implying, that we are much more in Danger of being overthrown and seduced by his Policy, than over-borne by his Power.

From this short Description of *Satan*, we may very easily judge whose Children they are, who love to make a Lie, who speak Evil, and slander their Neighbour, and whose Hearts are full of Pride, Subtlety and Malice, Envy, Revenge and all Uncharitableness.—— Surely, they have *Satan* for their Father—— For, the Tempers of *Satan* they know; and the Works of *Satan* they do. But were they to see either themselves, or *Satan*, as he is, they could not but be terrified at their own Likeness, and abhor themselves in Dust and Ashes.

But, to return, The Justice of GOD, in suffering us to be tempted above what we are able to bear

bear——And not only so, but to him that overcometh, he will give a Crown of everlasting and eternal Life.

The holy Angels themselves, it should seem, were once put to a Trial whether they would be faithful or not. The first *Adam* was tempted even in Paradise. And *Jesus Christ*, that second *Adam*, though he was a Son, yet was carried, as our Representative, by the Holy Spirit into the Wilderness, to be tempted of the Devil. And there is not one single Spirit in Paradise amongst the Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets, the glorious Company of the Apostles, the noble Army of the Martyrs, and the Spirits of just Men made perfect, who, when on Earth, was not assaulted by the fiery Darts of that wicked one, *the Devil*.

What then has been the common Lot of all God's Children, of the Angels, nay, of the Eternal Son of God himself, we must not think to be exempted from. No, it is sufficient if we are made perfect through Temptations, as they were. - - - And, therefore, since we cannot but be tempted, unless we could unmake human Nature, instead of repining at our Condition, we should rather be enquiring, at what Time of our Lives *Satan* most violently assaults us? And what those Devices are, which he commonly makes Use of, in order to get an *Advantage over us*?

As to the *first* Question, I answer, we must expect to be tempted by him, in some Degree or other, all our Lives long.——For, this Life being a continual Warfare, we must never expect

expect to have Rest from our spiritual Adversary, the Devil; or say, our Combat with him is finished, 'till with our Blessed Master, *Christ Jesus*, we bow down our Heads, and give up the Ghost.

But since the Time of our Conversion, or our first Entering upon the Spiritual Life, is the most critical Time at which he most violently besets us, as well knowing, if he can prevent our Setting out, he can lead us captive at his Will; and since the wise Son of *Sirach* very particularly warns us, when we are going to serve the Lord, to prepare our Souls for Temptation, I shall, in Answer to the other Question, pass on to the

Second General Thing proposed; and point out, and, withal, give some Directions, how to overcome those Devices, which *Satan* generally makes Use of, at our first Conversion, in order to get an Advantage over us.

But, before I proceed to do this, let me observe to you, that whatsoever shall be delivered in the following Discourse, is only designed for such as have actually entered upon the Divine Life; and not for carnal almost Christians, who have the Form of Godliness, but never yet felt the Power of it in their Hearts. This being premised,

The *first* Device I shall mention, which *Satan* makes Use of, is, to drive us to Despair.

When

When our merciful God and Father awakens a Sinner, by the Terrors of the Law, and by his Holy Spirit convinceth him of Sin, in order to lead him to *Jesus Christ*, and to shew him the great Necessity of a Redeemer; then *Satan* generally strikes in, and aggravates those Convictions to such a Degree, as to make the Sinner doubt of finding Mercy through the Mediator.

Thus, in all his Temptations of the Holy *Jesus*, our Saviour, he chiefly aimed to make him question, Whether he was the Son of God? *If thou be the Son of God, says he, do so and so.* With a great many such desponding Thoughts, no Doubt, he filled the Heart of the great Apostle *St. Paul*, when he continued three Days neither eating Bread or drinking Water; and, therefore, he speaks by Experience, when he says in the Words of our present Text, *We are not ignorant of his Devices*, how earnestly he will endeavour to drive the incestuous Person to Despair.

But, let not any of you be influenced by him, to despair of finding Mercy. For, indeed, it is not the Greatness or Number of our Crimes, but Impenitence and Unbelief, that will prove our Ruin: No, *were our Sins more in Number than the Hairs of our Head, of a deeper Die than the brightest Scarlet; yet the Merits of the Death of Jesus Christ are infinitely greater, and Faith in his Blood shall make them white as Snow.*

Answer always, therefore, his despairing Suggestions, as your Blessed Lord and Saviour did,
with

with an *It is written*. Tell him, you know certainly that your Redeemer liveth, ever to make Intercession for you; that the Lord God hath received from him Double for all your Crimes; And though you have sinned much, that is no Reason why you should despair, but only why you should love much, having so much forgiven.

Another Device that *Satan* generally makes Use of, *to get an Advantage over young Converts*, is, to tempt them to presume, and to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think.

When a Person has, for some little Time, tasted the good Word of Life, and felt then the Powers of the World to come, he is commonly (as indeed well he may) most highly transported with that sudden Change he finds in himself. But then, *Satan* will not be wanting at such a Time, to puff him up with a high Conceit of his own Attainments, as if he was some great Person; and will tempt him to set at nought his Brethren, as though he was holier than they.

Take heed, therefore, and let us beware of this Device of our spiritual Adversary; for as before Honour is Humility, so a haughty Spirit generally goes before a Fall; and God is obliged, when under such Circumstances, to send us some humbling Visitation, or permit us to fall, as he did *Peter*, into some grievous Sin, that we may learn not to be too high minded.

To check therefore all Suggestions to spiritua
Pride

Pride, let us consider, that we did not apprehend *Christ*, but were apprehended of him.——That we have nothing but what we have received.——That the free Grace of God has alone made the Difference between Us and Others; and, was God to leave us to the Deceitfulness of our own Hearts but one Moment, we should become weak and wicked, like other Men.——We should farther consider, that being proud of Grace, is the most ready Way to lose it.——For, God resisteth the Proud, and giveth more Grace only to the Humble. And, were we endowed with the Perfections of *Seraphims*; yet, if we were proud of those Perfections, they would but render us more accomplished Devils.——And, above all, we should pray very earnestly to Almighty God, that we may learn of *Jesus Christ*, to be lowly in Heart. That his Grace, through the Subtlety and Deceivableness of *Satan*, may not be our Poison. But that we may always think soberly of our selves, as we should and ought to think.

A *third* Device I shall mention, which *Satan* generally makes Use of, to get an Advantage over us, is to tempt us to Uneasiness, and to have hard Thoughts of God, when we are under Deadness and Dryness in Prayer.

Though this is a Term not understood by the natural Man; yet, whosoever there are amongst you, who have passed through the Pangs of the *New Birth*, they know full well what I mean, when I talk of Deadness and Dryness in Prayer. And, I doubt not, but many of you, amongst

amongst whom I am now preaching the Kingdom of God, are at this very Time labouring under it.

For, when Persons are first awakened to the Divine Life, because Grace is weak, and Nature strong, God is often pleased to vouchsafe them some very extraordinary Illuminations of his Holy Spirit ; but when they are grown to be more and more perfect Men in *Christ*, then he frequently seems to leave them to themselves ; and not only so, but permits a horrible Deadness and Dread to overwhelm them ; at which Times *Satan* will not be wanting to vex and tempt them to Impatience, to the great Discomfort of their Souls.

But, be not afraid ; for, this is no more than your Blessed Redeemer, that Spotless Lamb of God, has underwent before you : Witness his bitter Agony in the Garden, when his Soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto Death.——— When he sweat great Drops of Blood, falling down on the Ground ; when the Sense of the Divinity was withdrawn from him ; and *Satan*, that most cruel Adversary, in all Probability, was permitted, to set all his Terrors in Array before him.

Rejoice therefore, my Brethren, when you fall into the like Circumstances ; as knowing, that you are therein Partakers of the Sufferings of our Saviour *Jesus Christ*. - - - - - Consider, that it is necessary such inward Trials should come, to wean us off the Love of sensible Devotion, and to teach us to follow *Christ*, not merely for his Loaves, but out of a Principle of Love

Love and Obedience. - - - - - In Patience therefore possess your Souls, and be not terrified by *Satan's* Suggestions. - - - - - Still persevere in seeking *Jesus Christ* in the Use of Means, though it be sorrowing, and tho' through Benumpness and Barrenness of Soul you may go mourning all the Day long. - - - - - Consider farther that the Spouse is with you, though behind the Curtain; as he was with *Mary*, at the Sepulchre, though she knew it not. - - - - - That he has withdrawn but for a little While, to make his Visit more welcome. - - - - - That though he may now seem to frown and look back on you, as he did on the *Syrophænician* Woman; yet, if you, like her, cry out so much the more earnestly, *Jesus, thou Son of David, have Mercy on us*; he will certainly appear, and be made known unto you again, either in the Temple, by breaking of Bread, or some other Way.

But, amongst all the Devices, that *Satan* makes Use of, to get an Advantage over us, there is none in which he is more successful, or by which he grieves the Children of God worse, than that

Fourth Device, which I am going to mention, viz. His troubling you with blasphemous, prophane, impious, unbelieving Thoughts; and, sometimes, to such a Degree, that they are as tormenting as the Wrack.

Some indeed are apt to impute all such evil Thoughts to a Disorder of Body. - - - - - But those, who know any Thing of the spiritual Life, can

can inform you with greater Certainty, that, for the Generality, they proceed from that Wicked one, *the Devil*; who, no Doubt, has Power given him from above, as well now as formerly, to disorder the Body, as he did once before *Job's*; that he may, with the more Secrecy and Success work upon, ruffle and torment the Soul.

You, that have felt his fiery Darts, can subscribe to the Truth of this; and, by fatal Experience, you can tell, how often he has bid you, *Curse God and die*, and darted into your Thoughts a thousand blasphemous Suggestions, even in your most secret and solemn Retirements; the bare looking back on which makes your very Hearts to tremble.

Now, I appeal to your own Consciences; have not some of you, when you have been lifting up Holy Hands in Prayer, been pestered with such a Croud of the most horrid Insinuations, that you have been very often tempted to rise off from your Knees, and been made believe your Prayers were an Abomination to the Lord? Nay, when, with the Rest of your Christian Brethren, you have crowded round the Lord's Holy Table, and taken the sacred Symbols of our Saviour *Christ's* most Blessed Body and Blood into your Hands, instead of remembering the Death of your Saviour, have you not been employed in driving out many evil Thoughts, as *Abraham* was in driving away the Birds, that came to devour his Sacrifice; and thereby been terrified, lest you have eat and drank your own Damnation?

But

But marvel not, as though some strange Thing happened unto you; for this has been the common Lot of all God's Children. - - - - - We read even in *Job's* Time, *That when the Sons of God came to appear before their Maker, i. e. at publick Worship, Satan also came amongst them, to disturb their Devotions.*

And think not that God is angry with you for these distracting, though ever so blasphemous, Thoughts: No, he knows it is not you, but *Satan* working in you; and, therefore, notwithstanding he may be displeased with, and certainly will punish him; yet he will both pity and reward you.

And though it be difficult to make Persons in your Circumstance to believe so; yet I doubt not, but you are more acceptable to God, when performing your holy Duties in the Midst of such involuntary Distractions, than when you are wrapped up by sensible Devotion, as it were, into the third Heavens. - - - - - For, you are then suffering, as well as doing the Will of God at the same Time; and, like *Nebemias's* Servants at the Building of the Temple, are holding a Trowel in the one Hand, and a Sword in the other. - - - But, be not you driven from the Use of any Ordinance whatever, on Account of those abominable Suggestions; for, then you let *Satan* get his desired Advantage over you; it being his chief Design, by these Thoughts, to make you fall out with the Means of Grace; and to tempt you to believe, you do not please God, for no other Reason, than because you do not please your selves.

Persevere

Persevere constantly in the Use of the Holy Communion especially, and all other Means whatever; and when these Temptations have wrought that Resignation in you, for which they were permitted, God will visit you with fresh Tokens of his Love, as he met *Abraham*, when he returned from the Slaughter of the five Kings; and will send an Angel from Heaven, as he did to his beloved Son, on Purpose to strengthen you.

Hitherto we have only observed such Devices as *Satan* makes Use of immediately by himself; but there is a

Fifth I shall mention, that is not the least, viz. Tempting us by our carnal Friends and Relations.

This is one of the most common, as well as most artful Devices he makes use of, to draw young Converts from GOD; for when he cannot entirely prevail over them by himself, he will certainly go to Work, and try what he can do by the Influence and Mediation of others.

Thus he tempted *Eve*, that she might likewise tempt *Adam*. — Thus he stirred up *Job's* Wife, to bid him Curse GOD and die. — And thus he made use of *Peter's* Tongue, to persuade our Blessed Lord and Saviour To spare himself, and thereby decline those Sufferings, by which alone we could be preserved and saved from suffering the Vengeance of eternal Fire.

And thus, in these last Days, he often stirs up our most powerful Friends, and our most dearest Intimates, to dissuade us from going in that narrow Way, which alone leadeth unto eternal Life.

But our Blessed Lord and Saviour has furnished us with a sufficient Answer to all such Suggestions——*Get you behind me, my Adversaries*; for, otherwise they will be an Offence unto you; and the only Reason why they give such Advice, is, because they favour not the Things that be of God, but the Things that be of Men.

Whoever therefore among you are resolved to serve the Lord GOD, prepare your Souls for many such Temptations as these, for it is necessary that such Offences should be to try our Sincerity, to teach us all to cease from Man, and to see if we will forsake All to follow *Christ*.

Indeed, our Modernisers of Christianity would persuade us, that the Gospel was calculated only for about two hundred Years; and that now there is no Need of hating Father and Mother, or being persecuted for the Sake of *Christ* and his Gospel.

But such Persons err, not knowing the Scriptures, and the Power of Godliness in their own Hearts; for, whosoever receives the Love of God in the Truth of it, will find, that *Jesus Christ* came to send not Peace, but a Sword upon Earth, as much now as ever.——That the Father-in-law shall be against the Daughter—
ter-

ter-in-law, in these latter as well as in the primitive Times; and that, if we will live godly in *Christ Jesus*, we must, as then, so now, from carnal Friends and Relations, suffer Persecution.

But, the Devil has another Device, as dangerous as any of the former,———*i. e.* By not tempting us at all, or rather by withdrawing himself for a little While, in order to come upon us at an Hour when we think not of it.

Thus it is said, that he left our Saviour *Jesus Christ* only for a Season; and our Blessed Lord has bid us to watch and pray always, that we enter not into Temptation; thereby implying, that *Satan*, whether we think of it or not, is always seeking how he may devour us.

If we would, therefore, behave like good Soldiers of *Jesus Christ*, we must be always upon our Guard, and never pretend to lay down our spiritual Weapons of Prayer and Watching, 'till our Warfare is accomplished by Death; for, if we do, our spiritual *Amaleck* will quickly prevail against us. What if he has left us? It is only for a Season; yet, a little While, and like a roaring Lion, with double Fury, he will break out upon us again.———And, so great a Coward as the Devil is, he seldom leaves us at the first Onset.———And, as he followed our Blessed with one Temptation after another, so will he likewise

wise treat his Servants.———And the Reason why he does not renew his Attacks, is sometimes, because God knows we are yet weak and unable to bear them——— and, sometimes, because this our grand Adversary thinks to beset us at a more convenient Season.

Watch very carefully, therefore, over thy Heart, O Christian; and whenever thou perceivest thyself to be falling into a spiritual Slumber, say to it, as *Christ* to his Disciples, *Arise my Soul, why sleepest thou?* Oh, Awake, put on Strength, watch and pray, or otherwise the *Philistines* will be upon thee, and lead thee whether thou wouldest not.

Alas! Is this Life a Time to lay down and slumber in? Arise, and call upon thy God; thy spiritual Enemy is not dead, but lurketh in some secret Place, seeking a convenient Opportunity how he may betray thee. If thou cease to strive with him, thou cease to be a Friend of God; thou certainly cease to go in that narrow Way which leadeth unto eternal Life.

Thus, my dear Christian Brethren, have I endeavoured to point out to you some of those Devices, that *Satan* generally makes use of, to get an Advantage over us; many others there are, it is no Doubt, which he often makes use of.

But, these artificial Devices of *Satan*, on Account

Account of my Yourh, and Want of Experience, I cannot yet apprise you of; but, I am entirely persuaded, they, who have lifted for Years in their Master's Service, and fought under his Banner, against our spiritual *Amaleck*, are able to discover much more of his Artifices; and, being tempted in all Things, like unto their Brethren, can in all Things advise and succour those that are tempted.

In the mean While, let me exhort my young Fellow-Soldiers, who, like myself, are but just entering the Field, and for whose Sake this was written, not to be discouraged at the fiery Trial, wherewith they must be tried, if they would be found faithful and true Servants of *Jesus Christ*.

You see, my dearly beloved Brethren, by what has been delivered, that our Way through the Wilderness of this World to the heavenly *Canaan* is beset with Thorns, and that there are the Sons of *Amaleck* to be grappled with, ere you can possess the promised Land. But let not these, like so many false Spies, discourage you from going up to fight the Lord's Battles, but say with *Caleb* and *Joshua*, *Nay, but we will go up, for we are able to conquer them.*

Jesus Christ, that Captain of our Salvation, has, in our stead, and as our Representative, baffled the grand Enemy of Mankind, and we have nothing to do, but manfully to fight under his Banner, and to go on from conquering to conquer.

Our

Our Glory does not consist in being exempted from Temptations, but in enduring the same. *Blessed is the Man*, says the Apostle, *that endureth Temptation*; and again, *Brethren, count it all Joy, when you fall into divers Temptations*: And, in that perfect Form, our Blessed Lord has prescribed us we are taught to pray, not so much to be delivered from all Temptations, as from the Evil of it. No, whilst we are on this Side Eternity, it must needs be that Temptations come; and no Doubt, *Satan* has desired to have all of us, to sift us as *Wheat*. But wherefore should we fear? For, he that is for us, is by far more powerful than all that are against us. *Jesus Christ*, our great High Priest, is exalted to the right Hand of God, and there sitteth to make Intercession for us, that our Faith fail not.

Since then *Christ* is praying, whom should we fear? And since he has promised to make us more than Conquerors, of whom should we be afraid? No, though an Host of Devils are set in Array against us, let us not be afraid; and though there should rise up the hottest Persecution against us, yet let us all put our Trust in GOD.———What, though *Satan*, and the Rest of his apostate Spirits, are powerful, when compared with us; yet, if put in Competition with the Almighty, they are as weak as the meanest Worms. God has them all reserved in Chains of Darkness unto the Judgment of the Great Day.———So far as he permits them, they shall go, but no farther;

ther; and where he pleases, there shall their proud malicious Designs be stayed. We read in the Gospel, that *though a Legion of them possessed one Man, yet they could not destroy him*; nor could they so much as enter into a Swine, without first having Leave given them from above. It is true, we often find they foil us, when we are assaulted by them; but let us be strong, and very courageous; for, though they bruise our Heels, we shall at Length bruise their Heads.

———— Yet a little While, and he that shall come will come; and then we shall see all our spiritual Enemies put under our Feet. —————

What if they do come against us, like so many great and strong Goliath's; yet, if we can go forth, as the Strippling David, in the Name and Strength of the Lord God of Hosts, we may in Spite of this Adversary say, *Oh Satan, where is thy Power? Oh fallen Spirits, where is your Victory?*

Once more, therefore, and to conclude, let us be strong, and very courageous, and let us put on the whole Armour of God, that we may be able to stand against the fiery Darts of the Wicked one. Let us, likewise, renounce ourselves, and the World, and then we shall take away the Armour in which he trusteth, and he will find nothing in us for his Temptations to work upon. We shall then prevent his malicious Designs, and being willing to suffer our selves, shall need less Sufferings to be sent us from above. *Let us have our Loins girt about with Truth; and for an Helmet, the Hope of Salvation;*

tion; praying always with all Manner of Supplication. Above all Things, *Let us take the Sword of the Spirit*, which is the Word of God, and *the Shield of Faith*, looking always to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, who for the Joy that was set before him, endured the Pain, despising the Shame, and is now set down at the Right Hand of God.

To which happy Place may GOD of his infinite Mercy translate us all, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, Three Persons and One Eternal GOD, be all Honour, and Glory, now and for evermore. Amen.

S E R M O N .

S E R M O N X V I .

T H E K N O W L E D G E

O F

J E S U S C H R I S T ,

The best Knowledge ;

O R ,

Worldly Wisdom of no Use to Sal-
vation,

John xvii. 3. *And this is eternal Life, that they
might know thee the only true God, and Jesus
Christ whom thou hast sent.*

By GEORGE WHITEFIELD, A.B.
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L O N D O N :

Printed for C. DAVIS, at D'Anvers's Head,
in Chancery-Lane.

M DCC XXXIX.

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S E R M O N XVI.

The Knowledge of JESUS
CHRIST, the best Knowledge.

1 COR. ii. 2.

*I determined not to know any Thing among you;
save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*



THE persons to whom these words were written, were the members of the church of Corinth, who, as appears by the foregoing chapter, were not only divided into different sects, by one saying, *I am of Paul*, and another, *I am of Apollos*; but also had many amongst them, who were so full of the wisdom of this world, and so wise in their own eyes, that they set at nought the simplicity of the gospel, and accounted the Apostle's preaching foolishness,

Never had the Apostle more need of the wisdom of the serpent, mingled with the inno-

cency of the dove, than now. What is the sum of all his wisdom, he tells them, in the words of the text, *I determined not to know any Thing amongst you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.*

A resolution this, worthy the great St. Paul, and no less worthy, no less necessary for every minister, and every disciple of Christ, to make always, even unto the end of the world.

In the following discourse, I shall

First, explain, what is meant by *not knowing any thing, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*

Secondly, Give some reasons why every Christian should determine not to know any thing else. And

Thirdly, Conclude with a general exhortation to put this determination into practice.

And *First*, I am to explain what is meant by *not knowing any thing, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*

By *Jesus Christ*, we are to understand *The eternal Son of God*. He is called *Jesus*, i. e. A *Saviour*, because he was to save us from the guilt and power of our sins; and, like *Joshua*, by whom he was remarkably typified, to lead God's spiritual *Israel* through the wilderness of this world, to the heavenly *Canaan*, the promised inheritance of the children of God.

He is called *Christ*, which signifies *anointed*, because he was anointed by the Holy Ghost at his baptism, to be a prophet to instruct, a priest to make an atonement for, and a king to govern
and

and protect his Church: — And he was crucified, or hung (O stupendous love!) till he was dead upon the cross, that he might become a curse for us: For it is written, *curst is every man that hangeth upon a tree.*

The foundation or first cause of his suffering, was our fall in *Adam*, in whom, as the living oracles of God declare, *we all died, i. e.* His sin was imputed to us all. It pleased God, after he had spoken the world into being, to create man after his own divine image, breathe into him the breath of life, and to place him as our representative in the garden of *Eden*.

But he being left to his own free will, out of the forbidden fruit, notwithstanding God had told him, *the day in which he eat thereof, he should surely die*, and thereby he, with his whole posterity, in who sename he acted, became liable to the wrath of God, and sunk into a spiritual death.

But behold the goodness, as well as the severity of God! For no sooner had man been convicted as a sinner, but lo! a Saviour is revealed to him, under the character of the seed of the woman, the merits of whose sacrifice was then immediately to take place and should, in the fullness of time, by suffering death, satisfy for the guilt we had contracted; and by becoming a principle of new life in us, would bruise the serpent's head, destroy the power of the devil without us, and thereby restore us to a better state than that in which we were at first created.

This is the plain scriptural account of that mystery of godliness to God manifested in the flesh; and to this our own hearts, unless blinded by

by the God of this world, cannot but yield an immediate assent.

For let us but search our own Hearts, and ask ourselves, if we could create our own Children, whether or not we would not create them with a less mixture of good and evil than we find in ourselves? Supposing God then only to have our goodness, he could not, at first, make us so sinful, so polluted as we are. But supposing him to be as he is, infinitely good, or goodness itself, then it is absolutely impossible that he should create any thing but what is like himself, perfect, entire, lacking nothing. — Man then could not come out of the hands of his Maker so miserably blind and naked, with such a mixture of the beast and devil, as he finds now in himself, but must have fallen from what he was; and as it does not suit with the goodness and justice of God, to punish the whole race of mankind with these disorders merely for nothing; and since men bring these disorders into the world with them; it follows, that as they could not sin themselves, being yet unborn, some other man's sin must have been imputed to them; from whence, as from a fountain, all these evils flow.

I know this doctrine of our original sin, or fall in *Adam*, is esteemed foolishness by the wise disputer of this world, who will reply, *how does it suit with the goodness of God to impute one man's sin to an innocent posterity?* But has it not been proved to a demonstration, that it is so? And therefore, supposing we cannot reconcile it to our shallow comprehensions, that is no argument at all: For if it appears that God has done a thing,

thing, we may be sure it is right, whether we can see the reasons for it or not.

But this is entirely cleared up by what was said before, that no sooner was the sin imputed, but a mediator was revealed; so that as in *Adam* all died, even so in *Christ* all might be made alive.

That *Christ* then, this God incarnate, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, that he might be freed from the guilt of our original sin; who was born of the virgin *Mary*, that he might be the seed of the woman only; who suffered under *Pontius Pilate*, a *Gen tile* governor, to fulfil those prophecies, which signified what death he should die — This same *Jesus*, who was crucified in weakness, but raised in power, is that divine person, that *Immanuel*, that *God with us*, whom we preach, in whom you believe, and whom alone the Apostle, in the text, was determined to know.

By which word *know*, we are not to understand a bare historical knowledge (for to know that *Christ* was crucified by his enemies at *Jerusalem* in this manner only, will do us no more service than to know that *Cæsar* was inhumanly butchered by his friends at *Rome*) but the word *know*, means to know, so as to approve of him, as when *Christ* says, *verily, I know you not*, i. e. *I know you not, so as to approve of you* — It signifies to know him, so as to embrace him in all his offices; to take him to be our prophet, priest, and king; so as to give up our selves wholly to be instructed, saved, and governed by him. It implies an experimental knowledge of his crucifixion, so as to feel the power of it, and be crucified

cified unto the world; as the Apostle explains himself in the epistle to the *Philippians*, where he says, *he counts all things but dung and dross that he might know him, and the power of his resurrection.*

This knowledge the Apostle was so swallowed up in, that he was determined not to know any thing else; that is. he was resolved to make that his only study, the governing principle of his life, the point and end in which all his thoughts, words, and actions, should center.

Secondly, I pass on to give some reasons why every Christian should, with the Apostle determine *not to know any thing, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*

And, *First*, without this, our persons will not be accepted in the sight of God. This, and consequently this only, is life eternal, says our blessed Lord himself, *to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.* As also St. Peter says, *there is now no other name under heaven whereby we can be saved, but that of Jesus Christ.*

Some indeed, may please themselves in knowing the world, others boast themselves in the knowledge of a multitude of languages; but could we speak with the tongue of men and Angels, or did we know the number of the stars, and could call them all by their names, yet without this experimental knowledge of *Jesus Christ, and him crucified*, it would profit us nothing.

The former, indeed, may procure us a little honour, which cometh of Man; but the latter only can render us acceptable in the sight of God: For, if we are ignorant of *Christ*, God will be to us a consuming fire.

Christ is the way, the truth, and life; no one cometh to the father but through him.--- He is the lamb slain from the foundation of the world, and none ever were, or ever will be received up into glory, but by an experimental application of his merits to their hearts.

We might as well think to rebuild the tower of *Babel*, or reach heaven with our hands, as to imagine to enter therein by any other door than that of *the knowledge of Jesus Christ*.

Other knowledge may make you wise in your own eyes, and puff you up; but this alone edifieth, and maketh wise unto salvation.

As the meanest Christian, if he knows but this, though he know nothing else, will be accepted; so the greatest master in *Israel*, the most letter-learned teacher, without this, will be rejected. His philosophy is mere nonsense, his wisdom mere foolishness in the sight of God.

The author of the words now before us, was a remarkable instance of this; never perhaps, was a greater scholar, in all what the world calls fine learning, than he: For he was bred up at the feet of *Gamaliel*, and profited in the knowledge of books, as well as in the *Jewish* religion, above many of his equals, as appears by the language, rhetoric, and spirit of his writings; and yet, when he came to know what it was to be a Christian, *he counted all things but loss, so he might win Christ*. And, though he was now at
Corinth

Corinth, that seat of polite learning, yet he was absolutely determined not to know any thing, to make nothing his study, but what taught him to know Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

Hence then, appears the folly of those who spend their whole lives in heaping up other knowledge; and instead of searching the scriptures, which testify of Jesus Christ, and are alone able to make them wise unto salvation, disquiet themselves in a pursuit after the knowledge of such things, as when known, concern them no more, than to know that a bird dropped a feather upon one of the *Pyrenean* mountains.

Hence it is, that so many, who profess themselves wise, because they can dispute of the causes and effects, the moral fitness and unfitness of things, appear mere fools in the things of God; so that when you come to converse with them about the great work of redemption wrought out for us by Jesus Christ, of his being a propitiation for our sins, and a principle of new life, to our souls, they are quite ignorant of the whole matter, and prove, to a demonstration, that, with all their learning, they know nothing yet as they ought to know.

But, good God! how must it surprize a man; when the Most High is about to take away his soul, to think that he has passed for a wise man, and a learned disputer in this world, and yet is left destitute of that knowledge which alone can make him appear with boldness before the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ? How must it grieve him in a future state, to see others, whom he despised as unlearned and illiterate men, because they experimentally knew Christ, and him crucified; exalted

exalted to the right hand of God, and himself with all his fine accomplishments, because he knew every thing, perhaps, but *Christ*, thrust down into hell.

Well might the apostle, in a holy triumph cry out, *where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of the world?* For, God will then make foolish the wisdom of this world, and bring to nought the wisdom of those who were so knowing in their own eyes.

I made this digression from the main point before us, not to condemn or deny human literature, but to shew, that it ought to be used only in subordination to divine; and that a Christian, if the Holy Spirit guided the pen of the apostle when he wrote this epistle, ought to study no books, but such as lead him into a farther knowledge of *Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*

And there is the more reason for this, because of the great mischief the contrary practice has done to the church of God: For, what was it but this learning, or rather this ignorance, that kept so many *Scribes and Pharisees* from a saving knowledge of *Jesus Christ*? and what is it, but this human wisdom, this science, falsely so called, that blinds the understanding, and corrupts the hearts of so many modern unbelievers, and makes them unwilling to submit to the righteousness which is of God by faith in *Christ Jesus*?

But, *Secondly*, without this knowledge our performances, as well as persons, will not be acceptable in the sight of God.

Through Faith, says the apostle, that is, through a lively faith in a mediator hereafter to come

come, Abel offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain. And it is through a like faith, or an experimental knowledge of the same divine Mediator, that our sacrifices of prayer, praise and thanksgiving, come up as incense before the throne of grace.

Two persons may go up to the temple to pray; but he only will return home justified, who, in the language of our collects, sincerely offers up his prayers through *Jesus Christ* our Lord.

For it is this great atonement, this all-sufficient sacrifice, which alone can give us boldness to approach with our prayers to the holy of holies; and he that presumes to go without this, acts *Korah's* crime over again, offers God strange fire, and, consequently, will be rejected by him.

Farther, as our devotions to God will not, so neither, without this knowledge of *Jesus Christ*, will our acts of charity to men be accepted by him.

For did we give all our goods to feed the poor, and yet were destitute of this knowledge, it would profit us nothing.

This our blessed Lord himself intimates in the 25th of *St. Matthew*, where he tells those that had been rich in good Works, *That in as much as they did it unto one of the least of his brethren, they did it unto him.* From whence we may plainly infer, that it is seeing *Christ* in his members, and doing good to them out of an experimental knowledge of his love to us, that alone will render our alms-deeds rewardable at the last day.

Lastly, As neither our acts of piety nor charity, so neither will our civil nor moral actions be

be acceptable to God without this experimental knowledge of *Jesus Christ*.

Our modern pretenders to reason, indeed, set up another principle to act from; they talk, I know not what, "of doing moral and civil duties of life, from the moral fitness and unfitness of things." But such men are blind, however they may pretend to see; and going thus about to establish their own righteousness, are utterly ignorant of the righteousness which is of God by faith in *Christ Jesus*.

For though we grant, that morality is a substantial part of christianity, and that *Christ* came not to destroy, *i. e.* not to take off the force of the moral Law, as a rule of action, but to explain and so fulfil it; yet we affirm, that our moral and civil actions are now no farther acceptable in the sight of God the Father, than as they proceed from a principle of a new nature, and an experimental knowledge of, or vital faith in his dear son.

From the death of *Jesus Christ* has turned our whole lives into one continued sacrifice; and whether we eat or drink, whether we pray to God, or do any thing to man, it must all be done out of a love for, and knowledge of him who died and rose again, to render all, even our most ordinary deeds, acceptable in the sight of God.

If we live by this principle, if *Christ* be the *Alpha* and *Omega* of all our actions, then our most indifferent ones are acceptable sacrifices; but if this principle be wanting, our most pompous services avail nothing. We are but spiritual idolaters, we sacrifice to our own net, we make
an

an idol of ourselves, by making ourselves, and not *Christ*, the end of our actions; and therefore such actions are so far from being accepted by God, that according to the language of one of the articles of our church, *We doubt not but they have the nature of sin, because they spring not from an experimental faith in, and knowledge of Jesus Christ.*

Were we not fallen creatures, we might then act, perhaps, from other principles; but since we are fallen out of *God* in *Adam*, and are restored again only by the death of *Jesus Christ*, the face of things is entirely changed, and all we think, speak, or do, is only accepted in, and through him.

Justly, therefore, may I, in the

Third and last place, exhort you, to put the Apostle's Resolution in practice, and beseech you with him to determine, *Not to know any thing, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*

I say, *determine*; for unless you sit down first, and count the cost, and from a well-grounded conviction of the excellency of this above all other knowledge whatsoever, resolve to make this your chief study, your only end, your one thing needful, every frivolous temptation will draw you aside from the pursuit after it.

Your friends and carnal acquaintance, and, above all, your grand adversary the devil, will be persuading you to determine not to know any thing, but how to lay up goods for many years, to get a knowledge and taste of the pomps and vanities of this wicked world. But do you determine not to follow, or be led by them,

them, and the more they persuade you to know other things, the more do you *determine not to know any thing, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified*. For, *this knowledge never faileth; But whether they be riches, they shall fail; whether they be pomps, they shall cease; whether they be vanities, they shall fade away. But the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and him crucified, abideth for ever.*

Whatever, therefore, you are ignorant of, be not ignorant of this—if you *know Christ, and him crucified*, you know enough to make you happy, supposing you know nothing else; and, without this, all your other knowledge cannot keep you from being everlastingly miserable.

Value not then the contempt of friends, which you must necessarily meet with upon your open profession to act according to this determination. For your Master, whose you are, was despised before you; and all that will know nothing else but *Jesus Christ, and him crucified*, must, in some degree or other, suffer persecution.

It is necessary that offences should come, to try what is in our hearts, and whether we will be faithful soldiers of *Jesus Christ*, or not.

Dare we then to confess our blessed master before men, and to shine as lights in the world amidst a crooked and perverse generation? Let us not to be content with following him afar off; for then we shall, as *Peter* did, soon deny him; but let us be altogether christians, and let our speech, and all our actions, betray to the world whose disciples we are, and that we have indeed determined *not to know any thing save Jesus Christ, and him crucified*. O then! well will it be with us, and happy, unspeakably happy shall

we be, even here, and what is infinitely better, when others that despised us, shall be calling for the mountains to fall on them, and the hills to cover them, we shall be exalted to sit down on the right hand of God, and shine as the sun in the firmament in the kingdom of our most adorable Redeemer, for ever and ever.

Which God of his infinite Mercy grant, &c.

SERMON

S E R M O N X V I I .

T H E

H E I N O U S S I N

O F

D R U N K E N N E S S ;

O R ,

Sobriety the distinguishing Mark of a
C H R I S T I A N .

*Prov. xx. 1. Wine is a Mocker, strong Drink is
raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is
not wise.*

By **GEORGE WHITEFIELD, A.B.**
of Pembroke-College, Oxford.

L O N D O N :

Printed for C. DAVIS, at D'Anvers's Head,
in Chancery-Lane.

M D C C X X X I X .

SERMON XVII.

THE

HILLION'S BILL

DUNFENESS

Second of the series of a
CHRISTIAN

THE
THE
THE

BY GEORGE W. B. B. B. B.
OF THE

L O N D O N

Printed by G. DAVIS, at the
the

M D C C X X I X



SERMON XVII.

The heinous SIN of DRUNKENNESS.

EPHESIANS v. 6.

Be not drunk with Wine, wherein is Excess; but be filled with the Spirit.



THE persons to whom these words were written, were the people of *Ephesus*; who being, as we are told in the *Acts*, worshippers of the great goddess *Diana*, in all probability worshipped the god *Bacchus* also; at the celebration of whose festivals, it was always customary, nay, part of their religion, to get drunk; as though there was no other way to please their God, but by turning themselves into brutes.

The Apostle therefore, in this chapter, amongst many other precepts more especially applicable to them, lays down that in the text;

and exhorts them, as they had now, by the free Grace of God, been turned from heathenish darkness to the light of the Gospel, to walk as children of light, and no longer make it part of their Religion or practise to be drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but, on the contrary, strive to be filled with the Spirit of that Saviour, after whose name they were now called and whose religion taught them to abstain from such a filthy sin, and to live soberly as they ought to live.

By the world being now christian, and the doctrine of the gospel every where received, one would imagine, there should be no reason for repeating the precepts now before us. But alas! christians, I mean christians falsely so called, are so led captive by all sin in general, and by this of drunkenness in particular, that was St. Paul to rise again from the dead, he might be tempted to think most of us were turned back to the worshippers of dumb idols; that we had set up temples in honour of *Bacchus*, and made it part of our religion, as the *Ephesians* did of theirs, *to be drunk with wine, wherein is excess.*

Our civil magistrates have not been wanting to use the power given them from above for the punishment and restraint of such evil doings; and I wish it could be said this plague of drinking, by what they have done, had been stayed amongst us. But alas! though their labour, we trust, has not been altogether in vain in the Lord, yet thousands, and I could almost say, ten thousands fall daily at our right hand, by this sin of drunkennels, in our streets; nay, men seem to have made a covenant with hell, and though
the

the power of the civil magistrate is exerted against them; nay, and though they cannot but daily see the companions of their riot hourly by this brought to the grave, yet they *will rise up early to follow strong drink, and cry, to-morrow shall be as to-day, and so much the more abundantly, when we awake, we will seek it yet again.*

It is high time therefore, for thy ministers to lift up their voices like a trumpet, and since human threats cannot prevail, to set before them the terrors of the Lord, and try if these will not persuade them to cease from the evil of their designs.

But alas! how shall I address myself to them? I fear excess of drinking has made them such mere *Nabals*, that there is no speaking to them. And many of God's servants have toiled all their life-times in dissuading them from this sin of drunkenness, yet they will not forbear. However, at his command, I will speak also, though they be a rebellious house. Magnify thy strength, O Lord, in my weakness, and grant that I may speak with such demonstration of the spirit, and with power, that from henceforward they may cease to act so unwisely, and this sin of drunkenness may not be their ruin.

Believe me, ye unhappy men of *Belial* (for such, alas! this sin has made you) it is not without the strongest reasons, as well as utmost concern for your precious and immortal souls, that I now conjure you, in the Apostle's words, *Not to be drunk with wine, or any other liquor, wherein is excess.*

For, *First*, Drunkenness is a sin which must

be highly displeasing to God; because it is an abuse of his good creatures.

When God first made man and had breathed into him the breath of life, he gave him dominion over the works of his hands, and every herb bearing seed, and every tree, in which was the fruit of a tree yielding seed, to him it was given for meat; but when *Adam* had tasted the forbidden fruit, which was the only restraint laid upon him, he forfeited this privilege, and had no right, since he had disobeyed his creator, to the use of any one of the creatures.

But, blessed be God, this charter, as well as all other privileges, is restored to us by the death of the second *Adam*, our Lord and master *Jesus Christ*. Of every beast of the field, every fish of the sea, and whatsoever flieth in the air, or moveth on the face of the earth, that is fit for food, we may freely eat, *i. e.* without scruple take, and eat; but then, with this limitation, that we use them moderately. For God, by the death of *Jesus*, has given no man licence to be intemperate; but, on the contrary, has laid us under the strongest obligations to live soberly, as well as godly, in this present world.

But the drunkard, despising the goodness and bounty of God, in restoring to us what we had so justly forfeited, turns his grace into wantonness; and as though the creature was not of itself enough subject to vanity, by being cursed for our sake, he abuses it still more, by making it administer to his lusts; and turns that wine which was intended to make glad his heart, into a deadly poison.

But

The heinous Sin of Drunkenness.

9

But thinkest thou, O drunkard, whosoever thou art, thou shalt escape the righteous judgment of God? No, the time will shortly come that thou must be no longer steward, and then the sovereign Lord of all the earth will reckon with thee for thus wasting his goods. Alas! wilt thou thus wrest scripture any longer to thy own damnation? and because *Jesus Christ* turned water into wine at the marriage feast, to supply the wants of his indigent host, say, that it is therefore meet to make merry, and be drunken. No, thou shalt be silent before him; and know, that tho' thou hast encouraged thyself in drunkenness, by such like arguments, yet for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.

But, *Secondly*, What makes drunkenness more exceeding sinful, is, that a man, by falling into it, sinneth against his own body?

When the Apostle would dissuade the *Corinthians* from fornication, he urges this as an argument, *flee fornication*, says he, *brethren*; *for he that committeth fornication, sinneth against his own body*. And may not I as justly cry out, *flee drunkenness*, my brethren, since he that committeth that crime, sinneth against his own body? For, from whence come so many diseases and distempers in your bodies; come they not from hence, even from your intemperance in drinking? Who hath pains in the head! Who hath rottenness in the bones! Who hath redness of eyes! He that tarries long at the wine, he that rises early to seek new wine. How many walking skeletons have you seen, whose bodies were once exceeding fair to look upon, fat, and well favoured;

voured; but, by this sin of drinking, how has their beauty departed from them, and how have they been permitted to walk to and fro upon the earth, as though God intended to set them up, as he did *Lot's* wife, for monuments of his justice, that others might learn not to get drunk? Nay I appeal to yourselves. Are not many for this cause, even now sickly among you? And have not many of your companions whom you once saw flourishing, like green bay trees, been brought by it, with sorrow, to their grave?

We might perhaps, think ourselves hardly dealt with by God, was he to send to us, as he did to the royal psalmist, to choose one plague out of three, whereby we should be destroyed. But had the Almighty decreed to cut off man from the face of the earth, and to shorten his days, he could not well send a more effectual plague, than to permit men, as they pleased, to overcharge themselves with drunkenness; for though it be a slow, yet it is a certain poison. And if the sword has slain its thousands, drunkenness has slain its ten thousands.

And will not this alarm you, O ye transgressors? Will not this persuade you to spare yourselves, and to do your bodies no harm? What, have you lost the first principles of human nature, the fundamental law of self-preservation? You seem to have a great fondness for your bodies, why otherwise to gratify their inordinate appetites, do you drink to excess? But surely, if you truly loved them, you would not thus destroy them; and was there no other argument to be urged against drunkenness, the consideration that it will destroy those lives you are so fond of, one would imagine, should be sufficient.

I know

I know, indeed, that it is a common answer, that drunkards make to those, who, out of love, would pull them as firebrands out of the fire, "We are no body's enemy but our own." But this, instead of being an excuse for, is but an aggravation of their guilt: For (not to mention that the drunkenness of one man has cloathed many a family with rags, and that it is scarce possible for a person to be drunk, without tempting his neighbour also) I say, not to mention these, and many other ill consequences, which would prove such an excuse to be entirely false, yet what is dearer to a man than himself? And if he himself be lost, what would all the whole world avail him? But how wilt thou stand, O man, before the judgment-seat of *Christ*, and make such an excuse, when thou shalt be arraigned before him as a self-murderer? Will it then be sufficient, thinkest thou, to say, *I was no man's enemy but my own*? No; God will then tell thee, that thou wast not thy own; that thou wast bought with the price of his dear son's blood, and thou oughtest therefore to have glorified him with thy spirit, and with thy body, which were his. And since thou hast, by intemperance, destroyed the body, he will destroy both thy body and soul in hell.

But, *Thirdly*, What renders drunkenness more inexcusable, is, that it robs a man of his reason.

Reason is the glory of a man; the chief thing whereby God has made us to differ from
the

the brute creation. And our modern unbelievers have exalted it to such a high degree, as even to set it in opposition to revelation, and deny the Lord that bought them. But though in doing this, they greatly err, and whilst they profess themselves wise, become real fools; yet we must acknowledge, that reason is the candle of the Lord, and whosoever puts it out, shall bear his punishment, whosoever he be.

But yet, this the drunkard does. *Nebuchadnezzar's* curse he makes his choice, his reason departeth from him; and then what is he better than a brute?

The very heathen kings were so sensible of this, that, in order to deter their young princes from drinking, they used to make their slaves get drunk, and be exposed before them. And didst thou but see thine own picture, O drunkard, when, after having drowned thy reason, thou staggerest to and fro, like one of the fools in *Israel*, and seest thy very companions making songs upon thee, surely thou wouldest not return to thy vomit again, but abhor thyself in dust and ashes?

When *David*, in a holy extasy, was dancing before the ark, *Michal*, *Saul's* daughter, despised him in her heart; and when he came home, she said, *How glorious was the king of Israel to day, who uncovered himself to day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamefully uncovered himself.* And may not every one that meets a drunkard, more justly say, *how glorious does he that was made a little lower than the Angels,*
look

look to day, when unmindful of his dignity, he has, by drinking, robbed himself of his reason, and reduced himself to a level with the beasts that perish?

But what if God, in the midst of one of these drunken fits, should arrest thee by death, and say unto thee, *Thou fool, this moment shall thy soul be required of thee.* Oh! how would'st thou appear in those filthy garments before that God, in whose sight the heavens are not clean. And how knowest thou, O man, but this may be thy lot? Hast thou not known many, in thy life-time, summoned at such an unguarded hour; and what assurances hast thou given thee, that thou shalt not be the next? Because God has forbore thee so long, thinkest thou he will forbear always? No, this is rather a sign that he will come at an hour thou lookest not for him; and since his goodness and long-suffering has not led thee to repentance, he will cut thee down, and not permit thee to cumber the ground any longer. Consider this then, all ye that count it a pleasure to turn yourselves into brutes, lest God pluck you away by a sudden death, and there be none to deliver you.

But, *Fourthly*, There is a farther aggravation of this crime, that it is an inlet to, and forerunner of many other sins; for it seldom comes alone,

We may say of drunkenness, as *Solomon* does of Strife, that it is like the letting our of water; for we know not what will be the end

end thereof. Its name is *Legion*: For behold a troop of sins cometh after it. And for my own part, when I see a drunkard, I can scarce, with the holy prophet, when he looked in *Hazael's* face forbear weeping, to consider how many vices he may fall into, e're he comes to himself again.

What horrid incest did righteous *Lot* commit with his own daughters when they had made him drunk! And, I doubt not, but there are many amongst you, who have committed such crimes, when you have deprived yourselves of your reason by drinking; that were you to hear of them, your heart like *Nabal's*, after he was told how he had abused *David* when he was drunk, would die within you. And had any told you, when you were sober, that you would have been guilty of such crimes, you would have cried out, with *Hazael* before mentioned, *Are thy servants so many dogs, that they should do thus?*

But no marvel that drunkards commit such crimes: For drunkenness drives the Holy Spirit from them; they become mere machines for the devil to work up to what he pleases; he enters into them, as he entred into the herd of swine; and no wonder if they then commit all uncleanness, and any other crime, with greediness. But this leads me to a

Fifth Consideration, which highly aggravates the sin of drunkenness, viz. That it separates the Holy Spirit from us.

It is to be hoped, that no one here present need be informed, that before we can be christians indeed, we must receive the Holy Ghost, must be born again from above, and have the Spirit of God witnessing with our spirits, that we are the sons of God. This, this alone is true christianity; and without the cohabitation of this Blessed Spirit in our hearts, our righteousness does not exceed the righteousness of the *Scribes and Pharisees*, and we shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of God.

But now, drunkards do, in effect, bid this Blessed Spirit depart from them: For what has he to do with such filthy swine? No, they have no lot or share in the spirit of the son of *David*. They have chased him out of their hearts, by defiling his temple; I mean their Bodies. And he can no more hold communion with them, than light can have communion with darkness, or *Christ* have communion with *Belial*.

The apostle therefore, in the words of the text, exhorts the *Ephesians*, *not to be drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but to be filled with the spirit*; thereby implying, that drunkenness and the spirit of God could never dwell in the same heart. And in another epistle, he bids them *avoid unprofitable conversation, as a thing which grieved the Holy spirit; whereby alone they could be sealed to the day of redemption*. And if unprofitable conversation grieves the Holy Spirit, what an infinite distance must drunkenness drive him from the hearts of men?

But oh that you were wise! that you would consider what a dreadful thing it is to have the Spirit of the living God depart from you:
For,

For, assure yourselves, if you live without him, you live without God in the world. You are in the same miserable forlorn condition as *Saul* was, when an evil spirit of the Lord came upon him ; and you are only so many vessels of wrath fitted for destruction. But now this brings me to the

Sixth and last reason I shall urge against the sin of drunkenness, that it absolutely unfits a man for the enjoyment of God in heaven, and exposes him to his eternal wrath.

To see and enjoy God, and to be like the blessed angels! always beholding the face of our heavenly father, in the glories of his kingdom, is such an unspeakable happiness, that even wicked men, though they will not live the life of the righteous, cannot but wish their future state to be like his.

But think you, O ye drunkards, that you shall ever be partakers of this inheritance with the saints in light? Do you flatter yourselves that you, who have made them often the subject of your drunken songs, shall now be exalted to sing with them the heavenly songs of *Sion*? No, as by drunkenness you have made your hearts cages of unclean birds, with impure and unclean spirits must you dwell.

A burning *Tophet*, kindled by God's wrath, is prepared for your reception, where you must suffer the vengeance of an eternal fire, and in vain cry out for a drop of water to cool your Tongues. Indeed you shall drink, but it shall be a cup of God's fury: For in the hand of the Lord there will be a cup of fury, it will be full mixed ;

mixed; and as for the dregs thereof, all the drunkards of the land shall suck them out.

But perhaps you may not believe this report. These words may be looked upon by you as idle tales, and I may seem to you as *Lot* did to his sons-in-law, when he came to warn them to get up out of *Sodom*, as one that mocketh. But if you believe not me, believe eternal Truth itself, and he has positively declared, that no drunkard shall ever enter into his kingdom.

And I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that as surely as the Lord rained fire and brimstone, as soon as *Lot* went out of *Sodom*, so surely will God cast you into a lake of fire and brimstone, when he shall come to take vengeance on them that know not God, and have not obeyed the gospel of our Lord *Jesus Christ*.

Behold then I have told you before; remember you this day were informed what the end of drunkenness would be. And I summon you, in the name of that God whom I serve, to meet me at the judgment-seat of *Christ*, that you may acquit both my master and me; and confess, with your own mouths, that your damnation was of yourselves, and that we were freed from the blood of you all.

But, Lord, has no one believed our report? Wilt thou suffer so many words to be spoken in vain, if it be yet in vain? No, methinks I see some pricked to the heart, and ready to cry out in the languagd of *David* to *Abigail*, *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to speak unto us. For surely, unless he had sent thee, this sin of drunkenness had been our ruin.* But now, since

since we find whither it will lead us, we are resolved to drink no liquor to excess while the world stands, lest we should be tormented in the flames of hell.

But alas! how shall we be delivered from the power of this Sin? Can the *Ethiopian* change his skin, or the *Leopard* his spots? So hard, almost, will it be for us who have been accustomed to be intemperate, to learn to live sober.

But do not despair; for what is impossible with man, is possible with God. Of whom then should you seek for succour, but of him your Lord? Who, though for this sin of drunkenness, he might justly turn away his face from you; yet if you pour out your hearts before him in daily prayer, and ask assistance from above, he will endue you with power from on high, and make you more than conquerors thro' *Jesus Christ* that loved you. Had you kept up communion with him in prayer, you would not so long, by drunkenness, have had communion with devils. And had you besought him instantly, that you might not be led into temptation, you would always have been delivered from the evil of it. But, like the prodigal, you have desired to be your own masters; you have lived without prayer, depended on your own strength; and see, alas! on what a broken reed you have leaned. How soon have you made yourselves like the beasts that have no understanding? *But turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways.* Come to him, with the repenting prodigal, saying, *Father we have sinned, we beseech thee, let not this sin of drunkenness have any longer dominion over us.* And lo! it shall happen to you even as you will.

But

But think not that God must do all, and you nothing. No; as we can do nothing without him, so he will do nothing without us. And if we pray that we may not be led into temptation, we must take heed not to throw ourselves into it.

A second means therefore I would recommend to you, in order to get the better of drunkenness, is to avoid evil company. For it is the evil communications of wicked men, that has drawn so many thousands into this sin, and so corrupted their good manners.

But you may say, *If I leave my companions, I must expect contempt: For they will certainly despise me for being singular.* And thinkest thou, O man, ever to enter in at the strait gate by a true conversion, without being had in derision of them that are round about thee? No; though thou may'st be despised, and not go to heaven, yet thou canst not go to heaven, without being despised: For the friendship of the world is enmity with God. And they that are born after the Flesh, will persecute those that are born after the Spirit. Let not, therefore, a servile fear of being despised by a man that shall die, hinder thy turning unto the living God. For what is a little contempt? It is but a vapour that vanisheth away, and cometh not again. Better be derided by a few companions here, than be made ashamed before men and angels hereafter. Better be the song of a few drunkards on earth, than dwell with them where they will be eternally reproaching and cursing each other in Hell. Yet a little while, and they themselves shall praise thy doings, and shall say, *We, fools, counted his leaving us to be folly, and his end to be with-*

out honour ; but how ts he nambred among the sons of God, and his lot among the saints.

But I hasten to lay down a *third* means for those who would overcome this sin of drunkenness,—to enter upon a life of strict self-denial and mortification. For this kind of sin goeth not forth but by prayer and fasting. It is true, this may seem a difficult task ; but then, we must thank ourselves for it; for had we begun sooner, that work would have been the easier. And even now, if you will but strive, the yoke of mortification will grow higher and higher every day.

And here, by way of conclusion to this discourse, I cannot but exhort all persons, high and low, rich and poor, one with another, to practise a strict self-denial in eating and drinking. For though the kingdom of God consists not in meats and drinks, yet an abstemious use of, and a frequent total abstinence from God's good creatures, are great promoters of the spiritual life. And perhaps there are more destroyed by living in a regular sensuality, than even by that very sin I have now been warning you of.--- I know, indeed, that many, who are only almost Christians, and who seek, but do not strive to enter into the kingdom of God, urge a text of scripture to justify their indulgence, saying, *That it is not what entereth into the man defileth the man.* And so we grant, when taken moderately ; but then they should consider, that it is proved by daily experience, that a person may eat and drlnk so much as not to hurt the body, and yet do infinite prejudice to his Soul.

For

For self-indulgence lulls the soul into a spiritual slumber, as well as direct intemperance; and though the latter may expose us to more contempt among men, yet the former, if continued in, will certainly shut us out from the presence of God. St. Paul knew this full well; and therefore, tho' he was the spiritual father of thousands, and was near upon finishing his course, yet he says, it was his daily practice to keep his body under, and bring it into subjection, no doubt, by a strict abstinence and fasting; not that he might arrive at higher degrees of perfection, but least after he had preached to others, he himself should be a cast-away. But why urge I the 'Apostle's example to excite you to a strict temperance in eating and drinking? Rather let me exhort you only to put in practice the latter part of the text, *to labour to be filled with the Spirit of God*, and then you will no longer search the scriptures to find arguments for indulgence; but you will deal sincerely with yourselves, and fast as often as the church enjoins, if your healths will permit; and eat and drink no more at any time, than what is consistent with the strictest precepts of the gospel. Oh do but beg of God, that you may see how you are fallen in *Adam*, and must be renewed e'er you can be happy, by the Spirit of *Jesus Christ*! Let us beseech him to enlighten us, to see the treachery of our corrupt hearts, and how pure and holy these bodies ought to be, which are living temples of the Holy Ghost, and then we shall shew ourselves men. Abstain from all appearance of any thing that will quench this holy

holy Spirit, and do any thing that will invite him into, or cause him to abide in our hearts. And thus being made temples of the Holy Ghost, by his dwelling in our bodies here, though after death, worms may destroy them; yet shall they be raised by the same Spirit at the general resurrection of the last day, to be fashioned like unto *Christ's* glorious body hereafter.

Which God of his infinite mercy grant, &c.

SERMON

SERMON XVIII.

THE INDWELLING OF THE SPIRIT,

THE

Common Privilege of all Believers.

A Discourse delivered at the Parish-Church
of *Bexly* in *Kent*, on *Whitsunday*, 1739.

Rom. viii. 14. *For as many as are led by the Spirit
of God, they are the Sons of God.*

By *GEORGE WHITEFIELD*, A.B.
of *Pembroke-College*, *Oxford*.

L O N D O N:

Printed for *C. DAVIS*, at *D'Anvers's* Head,
in *Chancery-Lane*.

M DCC XXXIX.

SERMON XVIII.

AND WALKING

SPIRIT

Common Prayer of all Believers.

A Sermon Preached at the Parish Church
of St. Andrew, on Whit Sunday, 1779.

By the Rev. Mr. John H. ...

IN CHURCH ... A.B.

...

...

...



SERMON XVIII.

The Indwelling of the Spirit, the
common Privilege of all believers.

JOHN vii. 57, 38, 39.

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, if any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.— He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.— But this spake he of the spirit, which they that believe on him should receive.



NOTHING has render'd the cross of Christ of less effect, nothing has been a greater stumbling block and rock of offence to weak minds, than a supposition, now current among us, that most of what is contained in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, was design'd only for our

Lord's first and immediate followers, and consequently calculated for one, two hundred years. Accordingly many now read the life, sufferings, death, and resurrection of *Jesus Christ*, in the same manner as learned men read *Cæsar's Commentaries*, or *the Conquests of Alexander*. As things rather intended to afford matter for speculation, than to be acted over again in and by us.

As this is true of the doctrine of the gospel in general, so it is in particular of the operations of *God's Spirit* upon the hearts of believers, for we no sooner mention the necessity of our receiving the *Holy Ghost* in these last days, as well as formerly; but we are look'd upon by some, as enthusiasts and madmen; and, by others, represented as wilfully deceiving the people, and undermining the established constitution of the church.

Judge ye then, *my brethren*, whether it is not high time for the true ministers of *Jesus Christ*, who have been themselves made partakers of this heavenly gift, to lift up their voices like a trumpet; and if they would not have those souls perish for which the *Lord Jesus* has shed his precious blood, to declare with all boldness that the *Holy Spirit* is the common privilege and portion of all believers in all ages; and that we also, as well as the first christians, must receive the *Holy Ghost* e'er we can be truly called the children of *God*.

For this reason, (and also that I might answer the design of our church in appointing the present festival) I have chosen the words of the text.

They

The common Privilege of all Believers. 3

They were spoken by *Jesus Christ*, when, as the evangelist tells us, he was at the feast of tabernacles. Our Lord (herein leading all an example) attended on the temple-service in general, and the festivals of the *Jewish* church in particular. — The festival at which he was now present, was that of the feast of tabernacles, which the *Jews* observed according to *God's* appointment in commemoration of their living in tents. — At the last day of this feast, it was customary for many pious people to fetch water from a certain place, and bring it on their heads, singing this anthem out of *Isaiab*, ‘ And with joy shall they draw water out of the wells of salvation.’ — Our dear Lord *Jesus* observing this, and it being his constant practice to spiritualize every thing he met with, cries out, *If any man thirsteth let him come unto me, rather than unto that well, and drink.* — He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath spoken, (where it is said, *God will make water spring ut of a dry rock, and such like*) *out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.* — And that we might know what our Saviour meant by this living water, the Evangelist immediately adds, *But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive.*

These last Words I shall chiefly insist on in the ensuing discourse, and shall treat on them in the following manner.

First, I shall briefly shew what is meant by the word *Spirit*.

Secondly, I shall shew that this *Spirit* is the common privilege of all believers.

The Indwelling of the Spirit,

Thirdly, I shall shew the reason on which this doctrine is founded.

Lastly, I shall conclude with a general exhortation, to believe on *Jesus Christ*, whereby alone we can be qualified to receive this Spirit.

And *First*, I am briefly to shew what is meant by the Spirit.

By the *Spirit*, or the *Holy Ghost*, is to be understood the third person in the ever blessed trinity, consubstantial and co-eternal with the father and the son, proceeding from, yet equal to them both—For to use the words of our church in this day's office, that which we believe of the glory of the *Father*, the same we believe of the *Son*, and of the *Holy Ghost*, without any difference or inequality.

Thus says *St. John*, in his first epistle, chap. v. ver. 7. *there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father. the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one* And our Lord when he gave his Apostles commission to go and teach all nations, commands them to baptize in the name of the *Holy Ghost*, as well as of the *Father* and the *Son*.—And *St. Peter*, *Acts* v. ver. 3. said to *Ananias*, *why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?* And, ver. 4. he says, *Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God*.—From all which passages, it is plain, that the *Holy Ghost*, is truly and properly God. as well as the *Father* and the *Son*.—This is an unspeakable mystery, but a mystery of God's revealing, and therefore to be assented to with our whole Hearts ———

Seeing

Seeing God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should deceive.

I proceed, *Secondly*, to prove, that the *Holy Ghost*, is the common privilege of all believers.

But, here I would not be understood of so receiving the *Holy Ghost*, as to enable us to work miracles, or shew outward signs and wonders. For I allow our adversaries that to pretend to be inspired, in this sense, is being wise above what is written. Perhaps it cannot be proved, that God ever interposed in this extraordinary manner, but when some new Revelation was to be established, as at the first settling of the mosaic and gospel dispensation.—And as for my own part, I cannot but suspect the spirit of those who insist upon a repetition of such miracles at this time.—For the world being now become nominally christian, at least, (tho', God knows, little of the power is left among us) there need not outward miracles, but only an inward co-operation of the *Holy Spirit* with the word, to prove that Jesus is the *Messiah* which was to come into the world.

Besides, it is possible for thee, O man, to have faith, so as to be able to remove mountains, or cast out devils; nay, thou mightest speak with the tongue of men and angels, yea, and bid the sun stand still in the midst of heaven, yet, what would all these gifts of the Spirit avail thee, without being made partaker of his sanctifying graces? *Saul* had the spirit of government for a while, so as to become another man, and yet was a cast away.

And many, who cast out devil's in *Christ's* name, at the last will be disowned by him. If there-

fore thou hadst only the gifts, but was destitute of the graces of the *Holy Ghost*, they would only serve to lead thee with so much the more solemnity to hell.

Here then, I say, we join issue with our adversaries, and will readily grant, that we are not in this sense to be inspired, as were our Lord's first Apostles. But unless Men have eyes which see not, and ears that hear not, how can they read the latter part of the text, and not confess that the Holy Spirit, in another sense, is the common privilege of all believers, even to the end of the world? — *This spake he of the spirit, which they that believe on him should receive* — Observe, he does not say, they that believe on him for one or two ages, but they that believe on him in general, *i. e.* at all times, and in all places. — So that, unless we can, prove, that St. *John* was under a delusion when he wrote these words, we must believe that we, even we also, shall receive the *Holy Ghost*, if we believe on the Lord *Jesus* with our whole hearts.

Again, our Lord, just before his bitter passion, when he was about to offer up his soul an offering for the sins of the world; when his heart was most enlarged, and he would undoubtedly demand the most excellent gift for his disciples, prays, *That they all may be one, as thou, father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us* — *I in them, and thou in me, that they be made perfect in one*; that is, that all his true followers might be united to him by his Holy Spirit, by as real, vital, and mystical an union, as there is between *Jesus Christ* and the father. I

say

say all his Followers. ——— For it is evident from our Lord's own words, that he had us and all believers in view, when he put up this prayer — *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word*; so that, unless we treat our Lord as the high priests did, and count him a blasphemer; we must confess, that all who believe in *Jesus Christ*, through the word or ministration of the Apostles, are to be joined to *Jesus Christ* by being made partakers of the Holy Spirit.

There's a great noise made of late, about the word *Enthusiast*, and it has been cast upon the preachers of the gospel, as a term of reproach. ——— But every christian, in the proper sense of the word, must be an Enthusiast. ——— That is, must be inspired of God, or have God in him. For who dares say, he is a christian, till he can say, *God is in me*? St. Peter tells us, we have many great and precious promises, that we may be made partakers of the divine nature. ——— Our Lord prays, that we may be one, as the Father and he are one; and our own church, in conformity to these texts of scripture, in her excellent communion-office, tells us, that those who receive the sacrament worthily, I dwell in Christ, and Christ in them; that they are one with Christ, and Christ with them. ——— And yet, Christians in general, must have their names cast out as evil, and ministers in particular must be looked upon as deceivers of the people, for affirming, that we must be really united to God,

by receiving the Holy Ghost. Be astonished, O heavens, at this!

Indeed, I need not say, our letter-learned preachers deny this doctrine in express words. But however, they do it in effect.—— For they talk professedly against inward feelings, and say, we may have *God's Spirit* without feeling it, which is in reality, to deny the thing itself. — And had I a mind to hinder the progress of the Gospel, and to establish the kingdom of darkness, I would go about, telling people, they might have the Spirit of *God*, and yet not feel it.

But to return.—— When our Lord was about to ascend to his father, and our father; to his *God*, and our *God*, he gave his Apostles this commission, ‘go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.’ — By the term, *All Nations*, ’tis allowed, are meant all that should profess to believe on *Jesus* always, even to the end of the world. And accordingly, by authority of this commission, we do baptize them in this and every age of the church.—— And if this be true, then the proposition to be proved will be undeniable. For though we translate these words, *baptizing them in the name*; yet as the name of *God*, in the Lord's prayer, and several other places, signifies his nature, they might as well be translated thus, *baptizing them into the nature of the Father, into the nature of the Son, and into the nature of the Holy Ghost*. And consequently, if we are all to be baptized into the nature of the *Holy Ghost*, e're our baptism

tism be effectual to Salvation, it is evident, that we all must actually receive the *Holy Ghost*, e'er we can say, we truly believe in *Jesus Christ*. For no one can say, that *Jesus* is *my Lord*, but he that has thus received the *Holy Ghost*.

Numbers of other texts might be quoted, to make this doctrine, if possible, still more plain. But I am astonished, that any, who call themselves members; much more, that many, who are preachers of the church of *England*, should dare so much as open their lips against it. And yet with grief, *God* is my judge, I speak it, persons of the established church seem, more generally to be ignorant of it, than any Dissenters whatsoever.

But, good *God*! My dear brethren, what have you been doing? How often have your hearts given your lips the lye? How often have you offered *God* the sacrifice of fools, and had your prayers turned into sin, if you approve of, and use our excellent church-liturgy, and yet deny the *Holy Spirit* to be the portion of all Believers? In the daily absolution, the minister exhorts the people to pray, that *God* would grant them repentance, and his *Holy Spirit* — In the collect for *Christmas-day*, we beseech *God*, that he would daily renew us by his *Holy Spirit* — In the last week's collects we pray'd, that we may evermore rejoice in the comforts of the *Holy Ghost* — And in the concluding prayer, which we put up every day, we pray not only, that the grace of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and the love of *God*, but that the fellowship of the *Holy Ghost* may be with us all evermore.

But

But farther. — A solemn season is now approaching, I mean the ember-days, at the end of which, all that are to be ordained to the office of a deacon, are in the sight of God, and in the presence of the congregation, to declare, that they trust they are inwardly moved by the *Holy Ghost*, to take upon them that administration. — And to those, who are to be ordained priests, the bishop is to repeat these solemn words, *receive thou the Holy Ghost, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands* —

And yet, oh that I had no reason to speak it, many that use our forms, and many that have witnessed this good confession, yet dare talk and preach against the necessity of receiving the *Holy Ghost* now, as well as formerly; and not only so, but cry out against those, who do insist upon it, as *Madmen, Enthusiasts, Schismatics, and Underminers* of the established constitution.

But you are the schismatics, you are the bane of the church of *England*, who are always crying out, *the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord*; and yet starve the people out of our communion, by feeding them only with the dry husks of dead morality, and not bringing out to them the fatted calf, I mean, the doctrines of the operations of the Blessed Spirit of God — But here's the misfortune; many of us are not led by, and therefore no wonder, that we cannot talk feelingly of the *Holy Ghost* — we subscribe to our articles, and make them serve for a key to get into church-preferment, and then preach contrary to those very articles to which we have subscribed — Far be it from me, to charge all the clergy with this hateful hypocrisy.

crisy — No, blessed be God, there are some left among us, who dare maintain the doctrines of the reformation, and preach the truth, as it is in *Jesus* — But I speak the truth in *Christ*, I lie not — The generality of the clergy are fallen from our articles, and do not speak agreeable to them, or to the form of sound words, delivered in the scriptures — Wo be unto such blind leaders of the blind! How can you escape the damnation of hell? It is not all your learning, (falsely so called) it is not all your preferments, can keep you from the just judgment of God — Yet a little while and we shall all appear before the tribunal of *Christ* — There will I meet you, There *Jesus Christ*, that great shepherd and bishop of souls shall determine, who are the false prophets, who are the wolves in sheep's cloathing — Those who say, that we must now receive and feel the *Holy Ghost*, or those who exclaim against it, as the doctrine of devils.

But I can no more. It is an unpleasing task to censure any order of men, especially those who are in the ministry — Nor would any thing excuse it but necessity: That necessity which extorted from our Lord himself so many woes against the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, the letter-learned rulers and teachers of the *Jewish* church. — And surely, if I could bear to see people perish for lack of knowledge, and yet be silent towards those who keep from them the key of true knowledge, the very stones would cry out.

Would we restore the church to its primitive dignity, the only way is to live and preach the doctrine of *Christ*, and the articles to which we
have

have subscribed. Then we shall find the number of dissenters will daily decrease, and the church of *England* become the joy of the whole earth.

I am now, in the *Third* plate, to shew the reasonableness of this doctrine.

I say, the reasonableness of this doctrine — For however it may seem foolishness to the natural man, yet to those, who have tasted of the good word of life, and have felt the power of the world to come, it will appear to be founded on the highest reason, and is capable, to those who have eyes to see even of a demonstration — I say of a demonstration : For it stands on this self-evident supposition, that we are fallen creatures, or, to use the scripture expression, have all died in Adam.

I know indeed 'tis now no uncommon thing amongst us, to deny the doctrine of original sin, as well as the divinity of *Jesus Christ*, who is God over all, blessed for ever—but it is incumbent on those who deny it, first to disprove the authority of the holy scriptures — If thou canst prove, thou unbeliever, that the book, which we call *The Bible*, does not contain the lively oracles of God ; if thou canst shew, that holy men of old, did not write this book, as they were inwardly moved by the *Holy Ghost*, then will we give up the doctrine of original Sin. — But unless thou canst do this, we must insist upon it, that we are all conceived and born in sin ; if for no other, yet for this one reason, because that God, who cannot lie, has told us so.

But what has light to do with darkness, or polite infidels with the Bible? Alas! as they are

are strangers to the power, so they are generally as great strangers to the word of God. And therefore, if we will preach to them, we must preach from their hearts: For talking in the language of the scripture, is but like talking in an unknown tongue. Tell me then, O man, whatsoever thou art, that deniest the doctrine of original sin, if thy conscience be not seared as with a hot iron! Tell me if thou dost not find thyself by nature to be a motly mixture of brute and devil? I know these terms will stir up the whole *Pharisee* in thy heart; but let not *Satan* hurry thee hence. Stop a little, and let us reason together. Dost thou not find, that by Nature thou art prone to pride? Otherwise, wherefore art thou now offended? Again, dost not thou find in thyself the seeds of malice, revenge, and all uncharitableness? And what are these but the very tempers of the devil? Again, do we all by nature follow, and suffer ourselves to be led by our natural appetites, always looking downwards, never looking upwards to that God, in whom we live, move, and have our being? And what is this but the very nature of the beasts that perish? Out of thy own heart therefore will I oblige thee to confess, what an inspired Apostle has long since told us, that the whole world by nature lies in the wicked one, *i. e.* the devil; that we are no better than those whom St. *Jude* calls Brute Beasts. For we have tempers in us all by nature, that prove to a demonstration, that we are altogether earthly, sensual, devilish.

And

And this by the way will serve as another argument, to prove the reality of the operations of the Blessed Spirit on the hearts of believers, against those false professors, who deny there is any such thing as influences of the Holy Spirit that may be felt. For if they will grant that the devil worketh, and that so as to be felt in the hearts of the children of disobedience (which they must grant, unless they will give an Apostle the lie) where is the wonder that the good Spirit should have the same power over those that are truly obedient to the faith of *Jesus Christ*?

But to return. If it be true then, that we are all by nature a motly mixture of brute and devil, it is evident, that we all must receive the *Holy Ghost*, e'er we can dwell with and enjoy God.

When you read how the prodigal in the Gospel was reduced to so low a condition, as to eat husks with swine, and how *Nebuchadnezzar* was turned out, to graze with Oxen, I am confident, you pity their unhappy state. And when you hear, how *Jesus Christ* will say, at the last day, to all that are not born again of God, *Depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*, do not your hearts shrink within you, with a secret horror? And if creatures with only our degree of goodness cannot bear, even the thoughts of dwelling with beasts or devils, to whose nature we are so nearly allied, how do we imagine, God, who is infinite goodness and purity itself, can dwell with us, while we
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are partakers of both their natures? We might as well think to reconcile heaven and hell.

When *Adam* had eaten the forbidden fruit, he fled and hid himself from God. Why? Because he was naked; that is, he was alienated from the life of God, the due punishment of his disobedience. Now we are all by nature naked, and void of God, as he was at that time, and consequently, till we are changed, and cloathed upon by a divine nature again, we must fly from God also.

Hence then appears the reasonableness of our being obliged to receive the Spirit of God. It is founded on the doctrine of original sin. And therefore you will always find that those who talk against feeling the operations of the *Holy Ghost*, very rarely, or very slightly at least, mention our fall in *Adam*. No, they refer *St. Paul's* account of the depravity of unbelievers, only to those of old time. Whereas 'tis obvious, on the contrary, that we are all equally included under the guilt and consequences of our first parents sin, even as others; and to use the language of our own church-article, bring into the world with us a corruption, which renders us liable to God's wrath, and eternal damnation.

Should I preach to you any other doctrine, I should wrong my own soul; I should be found a false witness towards God and you. And he that preaches any other doctrine, howsoever dignified and distinguished, shall bear his punishment whosoever he be.

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From this plain reason then appears the necessity why we, as well as the first Apostles, in this sense, must receive the Spirit of God.

From the great work of sanctification, or making us holy, is particularly referred to the Holy Ghost. And therefore our Lord says, *Unless a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

For *Jesus Christ* came down to save us not only from the guilt, but also from the power of sin. And however often we have repeated our Creed, and told God we believe in the Holy Ghost, yet if we have not believed in him, so as to be really united to *Jesus Christ* by him, we have no more concord with *Jesus Christ* than *Belial* himself.

And now, my brethren, what shall I say more? Tell me, are not many of you offended at what has been said already? Do not some of you think, though I mean well, yet I have carried the point a little too far? Are not others ready to cry out, If this be true, who then can be saved? Is not this driving people into despair?

Yes, I ingenuously confess it is. But into what despair? A despair of mercy through *Christ*? No, God forbid; but a despair of living with God! without receiving the Holy Ghost. And I would to God, that not only all you that hear me this day, but thus the whole world was filled with this despair. Believe me, my brethren, I have been doing no more than you allow your bodily physicians to do every day. If you have a wound in your bodies, and

are in earnest about a cure, you bid the surgeon probe it to the very bottom. And shall not the physician of your souls be allowed the same freedom? And what have I been doing but searching your natural wounds, that I might convince you of your danger, and put you upon applying to Jesus Christ for a remedy? Indeed I have dealt with you as gently as I could; and now I have wounded, I come to heal you.

For I was, in the last place, to exhort you all to come to Jesus Christ by faith, whereby you, even you also, shall receive the Holy Ghost. *For this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive.*

This, this is what I long to come to. Hitherto I have been preaching only the Law, but behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy. If I have wounded you before, be not afraid, behold, I now bring a remedy for all your wounds. For notwithstanding you are all now sunk into the nature of the beast and devil, yet if you truly believe on Jesus Christ, you shall receive the quickening Spirit promised in the text, and be restored to the glorious liberties of the Sons of God. I say, if you believe on Jesus Christ. *For by faith we are saved; which is not of works least any one should boast.* And however some men may say, there is a fitness required in the creatures, and that we must have a righteousness of our own, before we can lay hold on the righteousness of Christ; yet, if we believe the Scripture, *Salvation is the free gift of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, and whosoever believeth on him with his whole heart, though his Soul be as black as*

h-ll itself, shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost
Behold then, I stand up, and cry out in this great day of the feast, *Let e . ery one that thirsteth come unto Jesus Christ and d-rink. He that be i v- th on him, out of his-belly shall flow, not only streams or rivulets, but whole rivers of living water.* This I speak, my brethren, of the Spirit, which they that believe on *Jesús* shall certainly receive. For Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever. He is the way, the truth, the resurrection, and the life. Whosoever believeth on him, though he were dead, yet shall he live. There is no respect of persons with Jesus Christ. High and low, rich and poor, one with another, may come to him with an humble confidence, if they draw near by faith. — From him we may all receive grace upon grace. For Jesus Christ is full of grace and truth and ready to save to the uttermost all that by a true faith turn unto him. Indeed the poor generally receive the gospel, and God has chosen the poor in this world rich in faith. But though not many mighty, not many noble are called; and though it be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God; yet even to you that are rich do I now freely offer Salvation by Jesus Christ, if you will renounce yourselves, and come to Jesus Christ, as poor sinners, I say, as poor sinners; for the poor in spirit are only so blessed as to have a right to the kingdom of God. And Jesus Christ calls none to him, but those that thirst after his righteousness, and feel themselves weary and heavy laden with the burden

burden of their Sins. Jesus Christ justifies the ungodly. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Do not then say you are unworthy; for this is a faithful and true saying, and worthy of all men, to be received, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; and if you are the chief of sinners; if you feel yourselves such, verily Jesus Christ came into the world chiefly to save you. When Joseph was called out of the prison-house to Pharaoh's court, we are told, that he staid some time to prepare himself; but do you come with all your prison cloaths about you; come poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked as you are, and God the father shall receive you with open arms as he did the returning prodigal. He shall cover your nakedness with the best robe of his dear Son's righteousness, shall seal you with the signet of his Spirit, and feed you with the fatted calf, even with the comforts of the Holy Ghost. Oh let there then be joy in heaven over some of you believing. Let me not go back to my master, and say, Lord, they will not believe my report — Harden no longer your hearts, but open them wide, and let the king of Glory in. — Believe me, I am willing to go to prison or death for you; but I am not willing to go heaven without you — The love of Jesus Christ constrains me to lift up my voice like a trumpet — My heart is now full. Out of the abundance of the love which I have for precious and immortal souls, my mouth now speaketh. — And I could now not only continue my discourse till midnight, but I could speak till
I could

I could speak no more.—And why should I despair of any? No, I can despair of no one, when I consider *Jesus Christ* has had mercy on such a wretch as I am.—However you may think of yourselves, I know that by nature I am but half a devil, and half a beast.—The free grace of *Christ* prevented me.—He saw me in my blood, he passed by me, and said unto me, *Live*.—And the same grace which was sufficient for me, is sufficient for you also.—Behold the same Blessed Spirit is ready to breathe on all your dry bones, if you will believe on *Jesus Christ* whom God has sent. Indeed you can never believe on, or serve a better master, one that is more mighty, or more willing to save.—Indeed I can say the Lord *Christ* is gracious, his yoke is easy, his burden exceeding light.—After you have served him many years, like the servants under the law, was he willing to discharge you, you would say, We love our master, and will not go from him.—Come then my guilty brethren, come and believe on the Lord that bought you with his precious blood. Look up by faith, and see him whom you have pierced. Behold him bleeding, panting, dying!—Behold him with arms stretched out ready to receive you all.—Cry unto him as the penitent thief did, Lord, remember us now thou art in thy kingdom, and he shall say to your Souls, *Shortly shalt thou be with me in Paradise*—For those whom *Christ* justifies, them he also glorifies, even with that glory, which he enjoyed with the father, before the world began. Do not say, I have bought a piece of ground, and must needs go see it; I have

have bought a yoke of oxen, and must needs go prove them; I have married a wife, I am engaged in an eager pursuit after the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, and therefore cannot come. — Do not fear having your name cast out as evil, or being accounted a fool for *Christ's* sake. Yet a little while, and you shall shine like like the Stars in the firmament for ever. Only believe, and *Jesus Christ* shall be to you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and eternal redemption. Your bodies shall be fashioned like unto his glorious body, and your souls fall into all the fulness of God.

Which may God of his infinite mercy grant through Jesus Christ; to whom with thee, O father, and thee, O Holy Ghost, three persons, and one God, be ascribed, as is most due, all Power, Might, Majesty, and Dominion, now, and for evermore. Amen. Amen.

PRAYERS

P R A Y E R S.

A Prayer for one entrusted with the Education of Children.

O Dearest Jesu, who gatherest thy lambs into thy bosom, and didst solemnly command thy servant *Peter*, to feed thy lambs; grant I may shew that I love thee more than all things, by doing as thou hast commanded him.

Lord, who am I, or what is in me, that thou shouldst thus put honour upon me, in making me any way instrumental to the preparing souls for thee? O Saviour, I have sinned against heaven, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son, much less to be employed in the service of thy children.

But since thou hast been pleased in me to shew forth all thy mercy; and hast called me by thy good providence to this blessed work, grant that I may always remember, that the little flock committed to my charge are bought with the price of thy own most precious blood. And let it therefore be my meat and drink, to
do

and drink, to feed them with the sincere milk of thy word, that they may grow thereby.

To this end, I beseech thee of thy free grace, first to convert my own soul, and cause me to become like a little child myself, that from an experimental knowledge of my own corruption, I may have my spiritual senses exercised, to discern the first emotions of evil that may at any time arise in their hearts.

Oh give me, I beseech thee, a discerning spirit, that I may search and try, and examine the different tempers of their sin-sick souls, and like a skilful physician, apply healing or corrosive Medicine, as their respective maladies shall require.

Gracious *Jesu*, let punishing be always my strange work; and, if it be possible, grant that they may be all drawn to their duty. as I would be drawn myself, by the cords of love. And when I am obliged to correct them, grant that it may not be to shew my authority, or gratify a corrupt passion, but purely out of the same motive from which thou dost correct us, to make them partakers of thy holiness.

Oh! keep me, I beseech thee, from being angry without a cause. Permit me not rashly to be provoked by the information and perverseness of their infant years; but grant I may shew all long suffering towards them: And by exercising such frequent acts of patience, and forbearance, grant, I myself may learn the meekness and gentleness of *Christ*.

O thou, who taughtest thy disciples how to pray, pour down, I beseech thee, the spirit of
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grace and supplication into their hearts, that at all times, and in all places they may both desire and know how to call upon thee by diligent prayer.

Father, into thy hands I commend my own and their spirits: Look down from heaven, the habitation of thy holiness, and bless them from thy holy hill.

Keep them, oh keep them unspotted from the world; grant they may fly youthful lusts, and remember thee, their creator, in the days of their youth. Train them, I beseech thee, in the way wherein they should go; and when they are old, let them not depart from it.

O thou who didst sanctify *Jeremiah* from the womb, and callest young *Samuel* betimes, to wear a linen Ephod before thee, sanctify their whole spirits, souls and bodies, and preserve them blameless, till the second coming of our Lord *Jesus Christ*.

O thou, who didst endue *Solomon* with grace, to chuse wisdom before riches, and honour; incline their hearts to make the same choice of thee, their only good; and may they always renounce and triumph over the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.

Finally, do thou, O blessed *Jesus*, who at twelve years old wast found in the temple, sitting among the doctors, both hearing and asking them questions, grant, that these children may love to tread the courts of thy house, and have their ears opened betimes, to receive the discipline of wisdom, that so, if it by thy good pleasure

pleasure, to prolong the time of their pilgrimage here on earth. they may shine as lights in the world; or if thou seest it best, to bring down their strength in their journey, and to shorten their days, they may be early fitted by purity of heart, to sing eternal *Hallelujah's* to Thee, the Father, and the Holy Ghost, in the kingdom of heaven.

Grant this, O Father, for thy dear Son's sake.
CHRIST JESUS, our Lord. Amen, Amen.

A PRAYER for a Servant.

O Thou high and lofty One, who inhabitest eternity, yet art pleased to dwell with the humble heart: O Blessed *Jesu*, who hast made of one blood all nations under heaven, with whom there is no respect of persons, and who in the days of thy flesh didst go down to heal a *Centurion's* sick servant; have mercy, I beseech thee, on me, even me, also a poor servant. Stretch forth the right hand of thy power, to heal all the diseases of my sick soul, and enable me by thy Holy Spirit, faithfully to discharge the several duties of that vocation, whereto I am called by thee my God. Give me grace I most humbly beseech thee, to obey my master, according to the flesh, in all things; not with eye-service, as a man pleases, but with singleness of heart, as unto *Christ*; knowing, that whatsoever my master doeth, the same he shall receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

Make my obedience to my master on earth, like to that which the holy Angels pay thee in heaven. When I am commanded to go, may I go, when I am required to come, may I come; whatsoever I am bid to do agreeable to thy will, may I do it heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men. But if at any time, O Lord, thou shouldst, to try what is in my heart, permit me to be tempted to do any wickedness, O do thou
give

give me grace, as thou didst *Joseph*, patiently to submit to a prison and to death itself, rather than sin against thee, my God. Knowing that it is thankworthy, if a man for conscience towards God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully. Enable me, O Lord, to shew good fidelity in all things committed to my charge. Do thou, who blessedst *Abraham's* servant, when he went to take a wife for his master's son, *Isaac*; so bless me in all my master's business, that he may see, as *Potiphar* did, that the Lord maketh all that I do to prosper in my hands.

Keep, O Lord also the door of my lips, that I offend at no time with my tongue; let a false tongue be far from me, and let me never lie unto my master, as *Gebazi* did. O let no such unfaithfulness cleave unto me; least by being a partaker with him in his crime, I partake also in his punishment. Bridle also my tongue from ever answering again: May all sullenness and peevishness of temper be put away from me, with all passion: May I learn of thee, O holy *Jesu*, to be meek and lowly in heart; O make me patient of reproof, willing to be taught, and subject with all fear and godly reverence, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. Or if ever, thro' the weakness of the flesh, I should offend in this point, as *Hagar* did against *Sarah*, enable me, I beseech thee, immediately to repent and to return again to my obedience. Grant also, O Lord, I may behave holily and unblameably to my fellow-servants: Let no corrupt communication, nor foolish talking, or jesting, which is not conve-

nient, at any time proceed out of my mouth, but ther giving of thanks; may our conversation be always seasoned with the salt of thy holy word, and such as may tend to the edifying one another.

Endue us all with that charity, which hideth a multitude of sins; and if ever, O Lord, thy glory should call me to bring up an ill report to my master against any of my fellow-servants, which, I beseech thee, of thy mercies, I may never have occasion to do; grant it may be done with gentleness and compassion, not to insinuate myself into my master's favour, but to prevent them from sinning against thee, and thereby ruining their own souls. Keep us, we beseech thee, from striving among ourselves, as *Abraham's* and *Lot's* herdsmen did, about the concerns of this life; but grant we may be always provoking each other to love and to good works. Preserve us, we beseech thee, from envying one another, either by the favour of our master, or any blessing whatsoever. Let us not seek our own, but each our brother's welfare, as members of the same body, as disciples of the same Lord; when one of us suffers, let all of us suffer; when one of us rejoices, let all of us rejoice with him: Make us pitiful and tender-hearted to each other, and if at any time we should have a quarrel, enable us, O Lord, immediately to forgive one another, even as thou God for *Christ's* sake, hast forgiven us.

Finally, O Lord endue us with a deep humility, that we may in brotherly love prefer one
one

one another, and in lowliness of mind each of us esteem his brother better than himself. O hear all our prayers for our master, and grant that he and his household may faithfully serve thee our Lord. O make him as devout as *Cornelius*, and us, like the soldiers that waited upon him, devout also. That thus adorning thy Holy Gospel in all things, we may at thy second coming to judge the world, be rewarded according as we have improved the different talents which we have received from thee, O glorious Redeemer, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. *Amen. Amen.*

*A PRAYER for one one under Spiritual
Desertion.*

O Ever blessed and most compassionate Redeemer, who wast in all things tempted — O thou lover of souls, who in the days of thy flesh didst offer up strong cries and tears, and wast heard in that thou fearedst — O thou restorer of mankind, who wast in such an agony in the garden, that thou sweatest great drops of blood, falling to the ground — O thou Almighty High Priest, who, when thro' the eternal Spirit, thou was about to make thy soul an offering for sin, hadst thy own divinity withdrawn from thee, and didst cry out in the bitterness of thy soul, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me* — O thou, who now sittest at the right hand of the father, continually to make intercession for us — look down, I beseech thee, upon me, thy unworthy servant for thou hast turnd away thy face, and lo! I am troubled — Thou hast taken off my chariot-wheels, and I drive heavily — Thou hast permitted a cloud to overshadow me, and an horrible darkness, fearfulness, and dread, to overwhelm me, so that my soul would be exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, did I not believe thou wouldst yet turn again, and visit me.

Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; but if my soul cannot be made perfect, unless I drink it, thy holy thy blessed will be done.

Lo here I am? deal with me as it seemeth good in thy sight — Only let thy grace be sufficient

sufficient for me; and in the midst of my agonies send down, I beseech thee, an angel from heaven to strengthen me.

Lord, thou knowest that Satan has desired to have me, that he may sift me as wheat; O grant that my faith fail not.

Suffer, O suffer him not to get an advantage over me, for thou art not ignorant of his devices—O let him not so prevail against me, as to make me entertain hard thoughts of thee my most loving master and compassionate redeemer. For I know thou of very faithfulness hast caused me thus to be troubled—And dost afflict me for no other reason, but to make me partaker of thy holiness.

Give me, O give me, the shield of faith, and enable me to repel all the fiery blasphemous thoughts, that the wicked one shall at any time dart into my mind. Let me drive them as carefully as *Abraham* did the Birds that came to devour his sacrifice—And oh! Let him never tempt me to think, that thou wilt impute them to me for sin.

Lord, thou only knowest the present dryness and barrenness of my soul, and how liable I am to be tempted to fret against thee, O Lord, and to seek pleasure in the creature, when I can find no sensible satisfaction in thee, my great redeemer, who art God, blessed for ever.

But, I beseech thee, keep my soul quiet and composed, for thy mercies sake, enable me only to take pleasure in thee, and to sit down solitary in the bitterness of my soul, and patiently wait till I can draw comfort from thee, the fountain of living waters, rather than hew out
to

to myself broken cisterns, that will hold no water.

Never, never let me fall out with any of thy ordinances, or think, I do not please thee in my holy duties, because I have no inward sensible pleasure in them myself.

Enable me to walk by faith and not by sight, and to seek thee in the use of all appointed means, though it be sorrowing; being assured that after three days I shall find thee in the Temple; or that thou wilt make thyself known unto me, by breaking of bread, or in some other way.

Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief, that I am now talking with thee as certainly, as *Mary* was, when thou didst converse with her at the Sepulchre; though she knew it not. — In thy due time reveal thyself again to me, as thou didst to her; and let me hear the voice of my beloved.

Thou hast promised, thou wilt not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear, but wilt with the temptation make a way for us to escape, that we may be able to bear it — Fulfil, O Lord, this thy promise— And after I have suffered awhile, strengthen, stablish, settle, and visit me, as thou didst thy servant *Abraham*, when he returned from the slaughter of the five kings.

Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me; restore me to the joy of thy salvation; and when my heart is duly prepared, and humbled by these inward trials, grant me a feeling possession of thee, my God, for the sake of thy dear Son, *Jesus Christ*, our Lord, *Amen.*
Amen.

*A PRAYER for one under the Displea-
sure of Relations, for being Religious.*

BLESSED Lord, who hast commanded us to call upon thee in time of trouble, and thou wilt deliver us; and hast always shewn thy self to be a God, hearing prayer, mighty and willing to save; hear me now, I pray thee, when I call upon thee; for trouble is at hand.

Thou seest, O Lord, how many of my brethren, according to the flesh, persecute me for thy name's sake; so that I must renounce them, or decline openly professing thee before men.

But God forbid I should love father and mother, brethren or sisters, more than thee, and thereby prove myself not worthy of thee. No! I have long since given thee my soul and my body; so lo! I now freely give thee my friends also.

For I now find by experience, that as it was formerly, so it is now—They that are born after the flesh, do persecute those that are born of the spirit — That thou camest not to send peace on earth, but a sword — And that, unless a man forsake all that he hath, he cannot be thy disciple.

Lo! I come to perform this part of thy will, O my God; being assured, that whosoever forsaketh father or mother, brethren or sisters, houses or lands, for thy sake, or the gospel, shall receive a hundred-fold in this present life, with persecution, and in the world to come life everlasting.

I trust

I trust, O Lord, it is for thy sake alone, that I now make an offering of the favour of my friends to thee ; for thou knowest O Lord, how continually they cry out, *spare thyself* ; tho' I am doing no more than thy holy word strictly requires me to do.

But do thou, O Blessed Saviour, who saidst unto *Peter*, *Get me behind me Satan*, enable me to stop my ears to their false insinuations, charm they never so sweetly ; for *they savour not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men*. And unless, O Lord, thou dost help, they will be an offence unto me, and cause me to deny the Lord that bought me.

Far be it from me, O Lord, to be surprized, because of those offences ; for thou hast long since denounced woe against the world because of offences ; and, I find, it is needful for my soul, that such offences should come, to try what is in my heart — And try whether I love thee in deed and in truth.

Blessed therefore, for ever blessed be thy holy name, that I am accounted worthy to suffer for thy name's sake. O let me rejoice, and be exceeding glad, that my reward shall be great in heaven.

O let me never regard any of their threatenings ; for when my father and mother forsaketh me, thou, O Lord, I am assured, will take me up.

Take me, O take me into the arms of thy mercy ; for henceforward know I no man after the flesh. And whosoever doth the will of my father, the same shall be my brother, and sister, and mother.

But

I know, O Lord, I know, that this will expose me to the derision and persecution of those that are round about me.

But do thou, who didst seek for the poor beggar, after he was cast out by the Jewish Council, and didst reveal thyself unto him, reveal thyself unto me also, when my name is cast out as evil by my friends and the world — Though they they curse, yet bless thou me, O Lord; and enable me, I most humbly beseech thee, to pray for them, even when they most despitefully use me, and persecute me; *Father forgive them for they know not what they do.*

It is owing, O Lord, to thy free mercy alone, that I have in any measure been enlightened to know thee and the power of thy resurrection. O let the same grace be sufficient for them also, and make thy almighty power to be known in their conversation.

Thou didst once, O blessed Saviour, magnify thy goodness in turning thy servant Paul, from being a bitter persecutor, to be a zealous preacher of thy gospel; and madest the trembling jaylor cry out, even to those whose feet he had hurt in the Stocks, *Sirs, what shall I do to be saved?*

Look down therefore, I beseech thee, in pity and compassion, on those of my own household; and after I am converted myself, make me, or some other, instrumental, to strengthen these my weak brethren; that tho' we are now divided amongst ourselves, two against three, and three against two, yet we may at last, all with one heart and one mouth, glorify thee, O Lord; that thou mayst come
and

and abide with us, O Lord ; as thou didst with *Lazarus, Mary, and her Sister Martha.* Grant this, O Saviour, for thy infinite merits sake. *Amen and Amen.*

A PRAYER for one desiring to be awakened to an Experience of the New Birth.

BLESSED *Jesus*, thou hast told us in thy Gospel, that unless a man be born again of the spirit, and his righteousness exceed not the outward righteousness of the *Scribes and Pharisees*, he cannot in any wise enter into the kingdom of God. Grant me therefore, I beseech thee, this true circumcision of the heart; and send down thy blessed Spirit to work in me that inward holiness which alone can make me meet to partake of the heavenly inheritance with the saints in light.

Create in me, I beseech thee, a new heart, and renew a right spirit within me. For of whom shall I seek for succour but of thee, O Lord, with whom alone this is possible? Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me whole—O say unto my soul, as thou didst once unto the poor leper, I will, be thou renewed—Have compassion on me, O Lord, as thou once hadst unto blind *Bartimeus*, who sat by the way-side begging.

Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest what I would have thee to do — Grant, Lord, that

that I may receive my sight—For I am conceived and born in sin, my whole head is sick, my whole heart is faint, from the crown of my head to the sole of my feet I am full of wounds and bruises and putrifying sores. And yet I see it not. O awaken me, though it be with thunder, to a sensible feeling of the corruptions of my fallen nature; and for thy mercies sake suffer me no longer to sit in darkness and the shadow of death.

O prick me, prick me to the heart! Dart down a ray of that all-quickenig light which struck thy servant *Saul* to the ground; and make me cry out with the trembling Jaylor, *What shall I do to be saved?*

Lord, behold I pray; and blush, and am confounded that I never prayed on this wise before.

But I have looked upon myself as rich, not considering that I was poor and blind, and naked. I have trusted to my own righteousness ——— I have flattered myself I was whole, and therefore blindly thought I had no need of thee, O great physician of souls, to heal my sickness.

But being now convinced by thy free mercy that my own righteousness is as filthy rags, and that he is only a true christian who is one inwardly! behold, with strong cryings and tears, and groanings, that cannot be uttered, I beseech thee, visit me with thy free Spirit, and say unto these dry Bones, *live.*

I confess, O Lord, that thy grace is thy own; and that thy spirit bloweth where he listeth.— And wast thou to deal with me after my deserts, and reward me according to my wickedness, I had long since been given over to a reprobate mind,

mind, and had my conscience feared as with a red-hot iron.

But, O Lord, since hy sparing me so long thou hast shewn that thou wouldst not the death of a sinner.— And since thou hast promised that thou wilt give thy holy Spirit to those that ask it, I hope thy goodness and long-suffering is intended to lead me to repentance, and that thou wilt not turn away thy face from me.

Thou seest, O Lord, thou seest, that with the utmost earnestness and humility of soul, I ask thy holy Spirit of thee; and am resolved in confidence of thy promise, who canst not lie to seek and knock till I find a door of mercy opened unto me.

Lord save me, or I perish; visit, O visit me with thy salvation.— Lighten my eyes, that I sleep not in death. O let me no longer continue a stranger to myself — But quicken me, quicken me with thy free Spirit, that I may know myself even as I am known.

Behold here I am. Let me do and suffer what seemeth good in thy sight, only renew me by thy spirit in my mind, and make me a partaker of thy divine nature. So shall I praise thee, all the days of my life, and give thee thanks for ever in the glories of thy kingdom, O most adorable Redeemer; to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour and praise both now and for evermore. *Amen.*

FINIS.

[Handwritten signature]

